

*True Religion the Interest of Nations, or
National Religion Demonstrated to be
the Duty of Nations, &c.*

(*The Beverly*)

Pfal. 79. 6. & Jer. 10. 25.

Pour out thy {Wrath} upon the {Heathen} that have not known
 {Fury} {Nations}
 {Kingdoms} that have not called on thy Name.
 {Families}



HIS Prayer doubled by the Spirit of God, for the weight of it, the safety to men, it should be well known, and the certainty of its effect contains a strong assertion of the great benefit of, and obligation lying upon Nations to National true Religion.

Phil. 3. 2.
Gen. 41.
32.

For seeing according to a grand Rule in Gods Administration of the World, Nations that have no National Religion, and whose Nationalness therefore becomes *Heathenism*, and is so branded by the Spirit of God, (for so Nations in Scripture very often signifies *Heathen*, that is, Nations without true Religion), are lyable to the pouring out of the wrath and fury of God upon them: It does not only follow by the rule of Contraries, that National true Religion, or Worship of the true God, hath a strong order to, and connexion with the favour of God; but as the positive Proposition is the prime and original, and gives ground to, and contains within it self the privative; so does this Proposition, That Gods *Anger* and *Fury* is at all times ready against those that do not know him, that do not call upon him as join'd in a *National Body*, or *Society*, being the

privative, owe it self to the other, being the positive; as shall be more fully made out in the arguing this Point.

At the present, it will be enough to observe, that these two Holy men, the *Composer of this Psalm*, and the Prophet *Jeremy* (except as some think they were both one), desiring the destruction of those Heathen enemies under whose oppression their own people (which at that time comprehended the Church of God) then groan'd, and praying *in spirit* for it, relye and rest the whole weight of their prayer upon this principle of great truth and consequence in Gods Government of the World; that as *Families*, as *Nations*, as *Kingdoms*, (for so all Communities are comprehended) they did not *know* nor *call* upon God, that is, they did not worship the *true God*; and therefore were most justly subject to his fiercest displeasure.

And on the other side, it is couched under this, though indeed before it, That the people that do know and call upon the true God, have a title to his favour, and vindication of them in all their distress, while they are consider'd as so *knowing*, and calling upon him, and not contradicting it by their actions. The Context therefore goes on arguing with God on this point, *They have devoured Jacob*, in whose quarrel and rescue God is so much concern'd.

And seeing the favour of God is Eternal Life, and his wrath burns to the lowest Hell; both his wrath and his favour are to be understood in their extent even to everlasting ages.

All which will ground the Proposition, which I mainly intend in this Discourse.

That National true Religion is the greatest security, strength and defence of a Nation against the Divine wrath and displeasure, and gives the surest claim to his favour, blessing and protection, both in this world, and in that which is to come. Because it is an observati-
 on of the greatest duty; and therefore to be most closely united in, and pursued to the utmost by all wise Nations, and by all the several parts, and members of a Nation; for it is their first and highest Interest: *Blessed is the Nation that is in such a case, yea happy is the people whose God is the Lord, who have Jehovah thus for their God;*

And this very consideration should reconcile all differences in National Religion, that can be compos'd without loss of that Truth, and corruption of those parts of the Worship of God, which give denomination to true National Religion.

This should incline those that are above, to the greatest condescensions; and those that are beneath to the most free compliances possible

*Psal. 33: 12
 &c. 144, 15.*

possible, if they value Religion, and love their Nation, that at least there may be union in National Religion, if there cannot be perfect Uniformity. For I am fully perswaded, that upon a strict examination of this Point, it will be found that National Religion (supposing it always the true) is the happiest model of union in Religion of any upon earth, and most pleasing to God, except that of the *Catholick Church*, whose union is in the Substantials of Truth, worship and practise, but comes under no other form or model properly taken: but except this, there is none so perfect to the ends and glory of Religion, so adequate to the expressions of Scripture concerning the publickness of Religion, so encouraging and advantageous to the practise, so reconcileable with the peace of Religion and Nations, so preventive of the endless divisions, and subdivisions Humane Nature is apt to fall into, when it yields up it self to a scrupulosity, and Disputatiousness about Externals and Forms in Religion.

I say again, I am perswaded no man can serve God with greater acceptableness, nor be Religious to greater ends and purposes of Religion, than by joining with the Nation, or Supream Civil Incorporation, whereof he is a member, so far as he can be permitted to do it, consistent with the Truth of Religion, and Divine Worship. I say, as far as he can upon these accounts, if not throughout.

And of this I shall endeavour to give great and valuable proofs from Scripture, and Reason agreeable to it, and deduced from it; and herein being a *Minister of God* according to the *National Religion*, I magnifie my Office.

Rom. 14
13.

To this purpose I will first consider of the Radical obligation we have to join our selves with others in the profession of Religion, and Worship of God, and how it rises from Personal Religion, the *Substratum* or foundation of all; and by what degrees it must and ought to rise, and how it most rationally determines it self in National Religion. It ought to attempt thus high, and cannot successfully attempt higher in the way of Association; to spread thus far, and cannot expatiate to any purpose beyond it: I shall therefore here give such Arguments for *National Religion* out of Scripture, as it does not afford to any other figure of union in it.

In the first place therefore it necessarily must be suppos'd and granted, That Personal Religion is the Fundamental Religion; even as a Nation, or even Universality of Humane Nature must become a notion without particular persons; in whom all Communities subsist; even so must *National, or Catholick Religion* vanish into imagination,

if it were not sustained by particular and Personal piety; *Nations and Families calling upon God*, most necessarily imply and include the particular persons of each doing so.

Ecclesiastical.

And herein it is further considerable, that every man is a compleat Being within himself; that as it is said of him, He is in his Soul and Body a little World within himself, so he is a Kingdom, a Society within himself; and we may say in this sense, He is a Church within himself also, as *Solomon* calling himself *Cohemoth*, the Congregating or the *Preaching soul*, in that great Treaty with himself, suppos'd his soul a Congregation, and a Preacher within and to it self first, and then to the publick; so ought every man to be to himself.

Here therefore is the first inviolable duty and obligation to Religion, because a man can never be absent from himself; and it is impossible for any force to surprize the passages of a soul to Heaven, or to hinder the souls Congregating in Holy Meditations, and Discourses within it self.

And as a man is thus consider'd, he cannot nor ought to suffer himself to be impos'd upon, or commanded without Divine Authority; for as thus consider'd, he cannot be forced by any, and he is accountable only to God: *He stands or falls to his own Master: Every one shall give account of himself to God*; which is one of the greatest Arguments the *Apostle* insists upon for mutual forbearance in disputable things in Religion; every man on this account ought to be able to render a reason of the hope that is in him, to himself and others; and not to rest in an *implicite faith*. It will be no mans excuse he was led or commanded into a false Faith, or Idolatrous worship.

Rom. 10.
10.

Every man also upon this same account is bound to make confession with his mouth to salvation in his proper place and station; and in a narrower sense, yet a sense as large as his capacity and rank, every true Christian is a Pillar, and Ground of Truth; that is, Truth must be settled, and strongly seated in his soul, and he must expose Truth, and bear it out in Confession and holy practise, and is himself a Temple or House of the living God, where God will please to walk and dwell; and therefore can be no way obliged to join with a Family, or any sort of larger Community, in a false Religion, though he should stand alone in the true, or should, as *Abraham*, forsake his People, or his Fathers House to do it.

1 Tim. 3.
15.

Gen. 12.1.
Gen. 2. 18.

Yet notwithstanding this, it is not good for a man to be alone, though in true Religion, if it can be otherwise; he is made for Society,

Society and is, as it were, imperfect without it: Herein he resembles God in some low degree, in whose *Image* and *likeness* he is made. God is an infinitely perfect Being in himself, yet he hath pleased himself in communicativeness to all his Creatures, and in the attraction of all in their several kinds, especially *Angels* and *Men* to himself; as if he was not satisfied in being holy, in being happy alone.

Thus man, though if he could not have society in True Religion, he would be yet a complete and absolute Figure alone; yet where, and so far as he can have society in it, he is so far from being complete alone, that he must needs prove a Cypher, a Nothing, if he affected and covered to be alone: Whatever he has, if he has not *Love*, he is *nothing*; *God is Love*, and therefore rejoices in communication from himself and with himself, and so must, so does every good man, every holy man also.

If there be True Personal Religion, there must be Religious Society, for Man is made for Society; and if he meets, he must meet with that Religious Sense he has upon himself, with that I say he must meet with others, which seems the absolute necessity of Religious Society. For if a man meets with his own Religion others that have the same sense of Religion, there arises a necessity of the Religion of all to meet together.

But further, Man was made for Society, and the first and supreme end of society, as of all things, is the glory of God; and therefore society is in the first place bound to be Religious society. Marriage the Root and beginning of society, was, that there might be a *godly seed*, *Mal. 2. 15.* to sustain a Succession of Religion: So society spreads on still, that there might be Religious Societies.

As soon therefore as *Seth*, the first Descendent from *Adam* in the holy Line, had a Son born in the same Line, it is recorded, that *Then Men began to call upon the Name of Jehovah*, that is most probably, *Adam* and *Seth* took it as a just and necessary occasion, not only to set up a pillar of Thankfulness in seeing themselves the Progenitors of the *blessed Seed*, but in the foresight of a holy society, just ready to spring from their loyns, they thought fit to promote Divine Worship into a publick State and certain Order; and this I think the most agreeable Interpretation of that controverted place: so that from the beginning of the world, all along the History of True Religion in the Old and New Testament, we shall find Religion contended into publickness, and all the advantages of Humane Society.

Gen. 4. ult.

Yea Humane Nature hath taken this so for granted, that it is doubtful whether there ever was a Society in the world, politically united or not wholly barbarous, but it was cemented in Religion, though being so generally but false Religion, it proved no better than Heathenism.

There may have been private Cabals of Atheism, but there never was a publick Association against *A God known and believed*, except in Hell. If we could suppose a Society designedly united without Religion, it would be like the Plot for building of *Babel*, an endeavour of such a part of mankind to set up for its self and its own security, as it were in defiance of Heaven.

A Society united in Civils, and crumbled into Sects and Divisions in Religion, that is, in the main substantials of Doctrine, Worship, and Practice, is a *Babel*, as it was under the curse of Confusion, of divided Language; A disparagement of Religion, which can be as it is indeed Religion, but one; as if its *Name* were *Legion*, or as if in fundamental points it could not sufficiently evidence it self, so as to be known to be the true: Lastly a disannulling the ancient Law of Society, which is principally for the Union of Religion; so that if men could agree in all things else, and were yet divided here, it were not true humane society, but would want the very noblest part or Principle of it, Religion, which is as a soul or spirit to it.

Yet too rigorous and severe a constraint of Uniformity, is both to forget humane infirmity, that does not allow so perfect an union in this world, (if a rigid Uniformity be indeed perfection) and to forget also that every man is a complete Being within himself, and makes a perfect Figure as he is alone; and therefore to grant nothing to this consideration, is rather to crowd men into a *Little ease* in Religion, than to unite them; and so pressing them too strait, makes them fly out of that uneasy state for more room, and dissolves the union that might else have been.

But in all the principal points of True Religion, Union is so necessary, that it stands good; *Humane society is for the sake of Religion*; yet in this state of Gods patience to the world, Commerce, and civil Conversation are no more than Property founded in Grace, for then we must go out of the world, yet still the supreme and prime end of Society is Religion.

Society in Divine Adorations is the state of *Angels* and *Saints* in Heaven: It was designed to be the State of Innocency in this world. It is a Law that cannot be repealed; It is the perpetual Duty of
Man:

Man: Fallen Nature hath a violent inclination to it, so that all societies consent to walk in the name of some God, though mistaken in the right object. But the word of God and Christianity, as they most clearly reveal the True Religion so the necessity of Union in it.

The publickness of Religion therefore, that it is most choosable for the glory of it to God, for the good it does to the souls of men, for the blessing and acceptance it receives from God; I shall plainly make evident from the reason of Scripture.

1. For the Glory publick Religion presents to God, it is evident, although God in his Son and Spirit is a sufficient Spectator and Witness of, and infinitely rich in his own Glory, in the understanding of, and his own eternal praises of himself, so that nothing can be added to him; yet it is most evident, God is pleased to delight in the publickness of his service, and the nearest approach of all his Creatures to him, and that not in solitary service, but the most conjoyn'd, as if infinity received Additions of Glory from the openness and publickness of his Worship, which yet we know is impossible. But it is the abyss of his goodness, that he delights in loving all his creatures, and being universally known, loved, and served by them, and that in the greatest Union herein, that as he himself is the prime Unity and Universality, and this is the perfection of his Being; so his Creatures sprung from him may return to him in the same Universality and Unity, in resemblance of himself, which is the highest and truest worship of him.

In Heaven there is an Innumerable company of Angels, and blessed Spirits, in one general Assembly, to praise and worship God. The Scripture excites the praise of all the Earth, of all the world, of all Lands, of all People, Tongues, Languages, Nations, Kindred and Families; even the Heaven, and Earth, and things under the Earth, and the whole host of them, are called in to concert the Glory of God, and nothing left out but Death and Destruction, which cannot praise him, because never made by him: And when the Glory of God, as it rises from his Creatures, is represented at its highest pitch, it is thus set out: *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many Angels round about the Throne, and the Beasts, and the Elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb, &c. And every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and all that are in them I heard, saying, as it were in one Quire: Blessing, and Honour, and Glory,*

and

and power be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Thus *David* also musters up the whole Creation to join in the praises of God, not to fill up and adorn the *Divine Poësie*, but to shew the indisputable right God hath to the services of all his Creatures, and that in those which are not able to pay it immediately by themselves, every *wise and prudent holy man* is to observe that tribute of praise that is as it were marked upon them by the wisdom that made them, and to offer it up for them, when the service of God is represented, as most glorious in its being most publick.

Every thing therefore in Gods Ordination of Religion, tends to publickness; *Our Saviour* will not appear but in the *fulnesse of his Body*, the Church, which does as it were compleat him: For it is in this sense his *Complement* or *Fulness*, though he fills *all in all*. The knowledge of God would cover the earth *even as water does the Sea*, and is restless, till it does; so the Preaching of the Gospel is to be extended to *all Nations, to every creature*.

In Prayer there is to be a coming of all flesh to God. Praise is to rise up as one pillar of Incense from the whole world. The Church especially is to publish the name of the Lord, and to ascribe greatness to our God.

Now the sense of this is, that since God hath been pleased to place his Glory in the publickness of Religion, in this Universality of it, all good men are zealous and earnest to draw in the publick Societies of the world, as much as they can, to love, fear, serve, pray to God, and praise him together.

God does not allow his servants that out of choice they should retire to the Religion of a Cloyster, or a Wilderness, or a private separated Assembly, as the greatest honour to him, but delights in the most publick Assemblies of his Saints, servants, and creatures; for though the reasons hereof lye deep in the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, yet it is spoken to us in the plainest Language, as if God carried it, as Princes do in their magnificence, whose Glory is in their great Courts, in the multitude of their Attendants, and People, Spectators, Admirers, and Tributaries to their luster.

2. I argue to the publickness of Religion from the good it does to the souls of men. It is from hence the greatest wildom to *win souls*; and they that *turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars*. Now the offer of true Religion to them that had it not before, the perswasion of it upon those that have not yet obeyed it, tends to their

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Conversion, Repentance, to their love and fear of God. They therefore that have the true sense of these things in their own souls use all means out of love to the Glory of God, and to the souls of men to propagate them to others, which is best done by all publick acts of Religion: This is the original Law, from the very beginning it was so: *Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied publickly, The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his Saints. Noah was a Preacher of Righteousness.* This was the great zeal of Christians in the first times.

Further, It strengthens, confirms, and inflames Religion among those that are the joynt Professors: Publick Religion is the great glory and security of Religion it self, mutually warming and assisting it self in all its several parts, and the Professors of it. *As Iron sharpens Iron, so is the countenance of a man to his Friend herein.* How much more lively is Religion probable to be in a Religious, than an Atheistick and Barbarous Country? nor does God afford those divine heats to those that withdraw from Assemblies in Religion, except in cases of necessity, however he may supply in extraordinary exigences, without which, *We to him that is alone in Religion, if he fall he has not any to help him up: and how can one be warm alone? If one prevails against him, he wants a Second to withstand together with him, and the benefit of the threefold cord, that is not easily broken.*

Every thing in nature endeavours towards Community or universal Unity, as its own strength and security. Even the Devils retain so much of first Nature, as to knit in a community; and false Christianity imitates the true in a pretence to *Universality*, though a most destructive one, like that of *the God of this World*, who aspires to Universal Monarchy, but it is in sin and death.

But this does not disparage True Religion, moving to an Universality of Truth, Peace, and Life for evermore.

3. The blessing and acceptance that Religion receives from the Divine Majesty, is much greater for the publickness of it; even in this sense, *Two are better than one, for they have a good reward for their labour.* In this sense their complicated services are more forcible, *their threefold Cord is not easily broken.* Not that God is prevailed upon to any change in himself or his Government by the services of his Creatures, though in a multitude; but he is pleased to found the occasions and opportunities of his own most bountiful Remissions, in the drawing near of their greater numbers: For as

when God was pleased to communicate himself more freely; he did it to a multitude of Creatures; so he delights in receiving back the glory of having thus communicated himself from a multitude also; and as there is more of himself in more of his Creatures, whether of several sorts or of the same, so there is more of his blessing in their approaches to him.

He that does not only weigh the Mountains in scales, but comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, takes notice of those prayers and desires of the poor of the people, that make the crowd and throng in his worship and service: He accepts the pair of *Turtle Doves*, the *two Mites*, when it is the *All*, and is ready to reward it.

This was the policy of *Nineveh's* Natural Religion, to unite their Force in Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer, and to take advantage of joyning the mute desires of the Beasts, that have a voice in the ears of God: *Abraham's* Servant made the *Camels* kneel down while he prayed to God.

Thus in Thanksgivings, It was *David's* art to gather up all the praises, even of the lowest of the Creatures, that could so meanly give them, and inspiring them with his own reason, made them, as it were, to follow his Harp, and unite in his own *Hallelujahs*. Thus he served himself of them, that making by them a greater present of glory to God, he might receive the greater blessing from him. The *Apostle* speaks of the good effect of *Christian Charity*, in causing an abundance of thanksgivings to God. *David* saying, *The congregation of the people would compass God about*, adds this prayer; *therefore for their sakes return thou on high*.

Now all these expressions, reporting to us a great force in the publickness of Religious Duties, we know it is only from the agreeableness of this publickness with the Divine Will and Nature, and his holy Ordination, who loves his *Saints*, and knows their approach to him is an approach to their life and happiness: And because he loves all his *Saints and Creatures* the more of them in conjunction draw near to him, the more of his tender mercies have the occasion to spread themselves; for else all the Nations are to God, but as the drop of the Bucket, and the dust of the Balance; all their services are not sufficient to him for a sacrifice to burn before him: He humbles himself to behold the things that are in Heaven, as well as those on Earth. He with great delight yet looks to one that is of a broken and contrite spirit, and that trembles at his word. As one day and a thousand years are both alike to the Infinity of God, so are a thousand persons and but one;

as it is all one to him to save with many or few, so it is to be intreated by them in prayer, or accept their praise; but according to the wisdom and holiness of the Divine Manifestation in his Love and Bounty, so he is pleased to see his Servants draw near to him in an union of Love among themselves, and every one having a claim to his favour, who is all Goodness, the united claim is stronger. *He hears even the Ravens that cry*, for they are his Creatures; if any man therefore could intwist their cry with his own in a general scarcity, he makes his own so much the stronger. He then that joyns the prayers and desires of many with his own, doubles still the strength, as is manifest by the Apostles so often and earnestly desiring the help of prayers.

And this may answer what may seem to be an objection against good men joyning with publick and promiscuous Assemblies, wherein are so many ignorant and bad men, that by their sins, ignorance, and folly, rather obstruct the effect and acceptance of good men joyning with them; so that it may seem better if holy and good men separated themselves, and left the generality of a Nation out of their Religious Services.

But from what hath been said it is very plain, that as the *Ninevites* and *Abraham's Steward* served themselves of the Beasts in their prayers, and *David* served himself of the very lowest of the Creatures in his praises, so good men consecrating the *publick Religion*, though resulting from a medley of worse men, turn it to greater glory to God, advantage to themselves, and the advantages of those worse men also, in sundry respects, when it does not prevail to their conversion and eternal salvation; as figures of value subordinating to themselves Cyphers, increase Sums to very vast.

The services of men not truly Religious, are not so acceptable to God alone, but are ennobled by the union of truly good men; for that they have such a virtue is plain; even *Job's* Friends, though good men themselves, received good by his offering their sacrifices; and that good men may subject the services of evil men to their own, is as plain by the *Apostles* rejoicing, that *Christ* was preached by those that preached him out of envy and contention, for while his preaching *Christ* out of love, over-ruled theirs, who preached the same *Christ* from worse respects; all their preaching of *Christ* was so forcibly united with the *Apostles*, that it became as if it was wholly his own, & turned to his Salvation; the greater & truer Light drinking up the less, & the less noble which followed in attendance upon it; & so much more the

prayers of less worthy men are snatched up to Heaven with the prayers of Holy men, and prevail for a full acceptance of them with God, leaving only some lesser portions of Blessing to those whose Hearts do not ascend with their prayers : Yet we must be careful of saying to any, *Stand off, I am bolier than thou.* Many a man being rejected under the Appearance of a *Publican*, whose heart's breaking within it self to God has greater acceptance from him, than what seems rather to be preferr'd among men.

For the Honour therefore of the most publick Conjunction in Holy Services, we may observe, those men who are of the most Happy memory in Scripture, Men of Renown for the Efficacy of their prayers, as *Noah, Moses, Samuel Job, Daniel*, the Apostle *Paul*, and many others, were no Monkish sort of men ; No men of Separation from the publique upon choice, but Personages, as of the most Divine spreading Reason, so of a publique Wisdom, Grace, and Spirit, containing a publique Interest, and Piety within their own Breasts ; yet joyning with as many as they could, to better their services mutually, and not scrupling union with them, lest they should be made worse, or their services less acceptable ; Men of no narrow and contracted Spirits, Principles or Devotion, but like our Saviours converse with *Publicans and Sinners*, they were as *Physicians to the sick, Helps to the weak*, as well as the *Companions of all that fear God*, pulling sinners with violence out of the Fire, converting them from the error of their way, saving souls from Death, and endeavouring to hide the multitude of sins ; and therefore were so prevalent in prayers for others, though at sometimes God was so incens'd, as to deny Audience even to such, except for their own souls.

Thus clear it is on the side of Publique Religion in these great Examples ; they separated from the sins, the superstitions, that were at any time become publique, but joyn'd with the Publique Religion, and thereby rais'd it to much higher Excellency : It is impossible to make bad Things good, as False Worship, or Corruptions of Practise, if never so many Good men fell into them ; It would endanger them, but cannot better that, which is of it self bad : But that which is in it self Good, which would be much dispirited through Evil handling it, by Bad men, may be made better by Holy mens Predominancy, and Ascendency in it ; and so turn to general Good, in *some Thirty*, in *some Sixty*, in *some an Hundredfold* ; which shews the Nature of the both Communicativeness

and Singularity of these Holy men ; Communicativeness in True Worship, though with Bad men ; Singularity from Sin and False Worship.

I have now dispatched this first Head I propos'd concerning the publickness of Religion in general : I come now to the second Head, *That this publickness determines it self in National Religion, neither staying short of it, nor expatiating beyond it.*

And to make good this, I first consider how humane Society rises, and what are the first bands of Union. And it is very evident the first Associations of mankind must grow out of Families, as I have observ'd the Law of Humane Society was first declar'd and promulg'd upon the Institution of Marriage. This was the beginning of Families, Families of all greater associations of men. Here also must begin all Religious Society. These are the most near and combin'd ; here therefore are the most frequent seasons of worshipping God, of daily praises of him, and prayers to him. The examples of it we find in *Abraham's, Joshua's, David's, Cornelius's Families*, and the Churches in the Houses of some Christians at the first. This Domestick Body is most close with it self, and more easily call'd together, therefore the first seat of Religious Society.

Families therefore for the closeness, nearness, and naturalness of that Government, as being the smallest of Communities, but the most primitive, are particularly nam'd in this Prayer against the Heathen, and made another expression together with Kingdoms of Irreligious Communities.

For as Kingdoms are greater Families, united indeed as Families but greater.

So Families though lesser, were yet the first Kingdoms.

Religion therefore being a most uncontestable duty and obligation in those lesser Kingdoms, Families, it argues to the same obligation and duty in those greater Families, Kingdoms, and the Religion or Irreligion of the one and the other run along one with the other.

Thus God first eminently himself founded Religion in *Abraham's* Family, and so commenc'd both the Family and Religion into a Nation and Kingdom. Religion therefore rises higher, and settles here as upon the most advantageous Eminences, as in the most full and free spread Communities, call'd Nations for their greatness and numerousness, Kingdoms for their Majestick government and union in it.

For a Nation or Kingdom is a part of Mankind canton'd indeed from the whole world, and the wideness of that, yet into a larger compass than Neighbourhoods, Towns or Cities, and is generally inclosed within some more remarkable bounds of place, as Seas, Rivers, Mountains; united by nearness of Manners, Customs, and Disposition, arising from like Temperature of Air and Climate, freedom of Conversation and Commerce, having one and the same Language, but especially as under the same Civil Interests, Laws, Government, and Legislative Authority.

For these mutual Bonds are they which give Reason to National Religion, as the most solemn instance of publick Religion and Worship of God, because by virtue of these it becomes one great Family.

I know there may be some exceptions from this description of a Nation, which will have their force upon National Religion also as it results from it. For sometimes one Monarchy does as it were stride over more Nations, sometimes one City or Free Town is distinguished from the rest of the World by one Government, one Civil Interest, independent in its Government in its proper Interest upon any other.

Now in such a Monarchy as contains several People and Nations under it, it does not properly give name to a National Religion, while their Interests, Laws, Conversation, and Civil Commerce are preserved and kept distinct, as these are often allowed to be under some conquering Potentacy.

On the other side if a narrower compass of people than we properly call a Nation, *viz.* a Region, a Province, a City, hath its Interests, its Laws, its Government, Conversation and Commerce, intire to it self; it is as to the purpose we are now upon, as it were a Nation.

The sum then is this: so far as Humane Society has drawn any People or Families into a close and more compacted state of Civil Interests, necessitude one to another, and Government running up to the highest point of Government in that compact state, so far is the obligation of Union in publick Religion drawn upon them; where these are freer, that attendance to union in Religion is freer also, any further than the common truth of Religion, and the obligations of that, bind even those at greatest distance and union one with another.

For thus Religion may and ought to unite all the true Professors of it, at what remove soever from one another. It may and ought
also

also to pass upon whatever bond of union there is in the world ; but there is no such union as Laws, Commerce, Conversation, common safety running all up to the supreme Government over that conjunction to graft Religion upon. All else is but consent in the same unity of one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one Faith, one Baptism, which make the Catholick Church one Body, and joining with one another, presentially in the same acknowledgments of God, when a concurrence of all things necessary happens to fall out, as cannot be supposed frequent in parts remote one from another, and of a divers lip or language.

The Catholick Church is indeed united as Humane nature is, in one and the same true Reason, and thereupon a readines of wise and learned men to correspond one with another at a distance, or confer one with another if at any time suitable concurrences favour it, or as the world, much more the Catholick Church is a Temple built to the Glory of the Creator and Redeemer, wherein all good men meet from one end of the Heaven to the other, in the unity of the same Spirit, and in the same kind of worship; and if opportunity allowed, in the same actual worship.

The nearer therefore any parts of the Catholick Church are by the Neighbourhood of Nations, by the frequency of Traffick, the nearer the more frequent the correspondencies are, the mutual assistance, may and ought to be.

But now in the Dependencies and Interweavings of all Civil Interests in Nations, there are not only those voluntary and contingent correspondencies, but such as first grow out of the nature of Humane Society, and bind of themselves to common true Religion ; and then have the favour, encouragements, directions, obligations of Laws and Authority running like the same spirit into all the several parts of a Nation, and recommending that National true Religion as it stands in this Union that is first commanded by God, besides much more free, ordinary, Actual Meetings in one and the very same place, and Acts of Worship. It is true indeed, the Worship of God allows our worldly callings, and the provisions of the present life, and Relation, and therefore a Neighbourhood, whether it be the more populous of Cities, or Towns, or the more infrequent of Villages, hath the conveniencies of more solemn and stated Meetings, the ordinary fit seasons of the *Lords-day*, and other solemn times of worship : thereupon National Religion is generally exercised in these lesser Societies, even as the Justice and Execution of
Laws,

Laws; and National Authority, must be brought home to men in their particular Countries, and Towns, and not rest in the Capital Cities at a distance from their daily Business and Conversation; and yet the standard of all things National is generally preserv'd there for the very sake of union. Even so of National Religion, not as Religion; for the standard of that is Scripture only: but as National; so the Agreement in it is deposited with all other National Acts. So that National Religion hath the advantage in these two things: First, The Naturalness and Closeness of the Union of a Nation to all the Interests of Humane Society; and therein it imitates the nearness and closeness of Families, or lesser Incorporations, as much as can be consistent with the second thing, viz. The Illustriousness, Magnificence, Honourableness of Religion, as seated in larger Bodies, but especially as upon the Sovereignties and Supremacies of the Great Incorporations of Mankind:

I shall only observe further, That All this does most effectually exclude the pretence of an *Universal Church-Monarchy*, as hateful in Religion, as an *Universal State-Monarchy* in Politicks, and Civil Liberty. Both of which are indeed Tyranny.

The Imaginary Benefits of such sorts of Union are infinitely toilsome, and tedious, while they are expected, and always in the issue found impossible to be enjoyed in their Fruits; but in the mean time, while the pretenders are labouring for, and grasping at so vast a power, they fill the world with the lamentable effects of their Ambition, and do indeed destroy Humane Society, because those Laws and Bands that tie it together, being so over-strain'd, fly in pieces; and I am sure nothing is more contrary to *Christianity*, than an *Universal Head of Religion* here upon Earth, except Christ himself with an Ubiquity of Holiness, Power and Influence, came down to reign upon it. An universal Union were indeed desirable, and glorious, if there were an Omnipresence of Vertues answerable to the Administration; but that being too great for any creature; too great in the present state of the World; Religion, and Christian Religion glide along with the Civil Union they find prepared, as I shall presently evince, beyond which is nothing but Usurpation.

I come now to the Arguments from Scripture and Reason for National Religion, not afforded to any other Figure of Union in it.

The first Argument shall be, that I derive from this prayer. I have chosen to discourse this point upon : and I lay it thus. The prayers, in which Holy men spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, rest upon some great Pillars and Principles of Divine Truth, and Argument : For particular cases, in which they prayed, are brought to those general principles, by an understanding inlightned to understand, in an humble sense, even as God understands, and inflam'd with a Holy Affection, in a lowly Imitation of the Divine Zeal, wherewith God performs all his Holy Ordinations. Thus as Princes they have power with God, because they offer him their Petitions according to his Established Rules of Government, and his own Holy Will, concerning the things, wherein they pray to him.

Now the understanding these Rules was extraordinary, and infallible to the Prophets, and Servants of God inspir'd by him, but to us in ordinary by the light of the Word of God, by the Laws of True and Right Reason in deductions from that word : And in which word, and the deductions from it, if we are not mistaken, the Efficacy will be certain, because if we ask according to his will, we are sure he heareth us, and that we have in some true sense the Petitions we ask of him. This is so valuable a Rule of prayer, that Daniel, though so great a Man of Vision, yet betook himself to this ordinary means of Instruction in the mind of God, Dan. 9. By Books of Holy Records, and general Chronology, he knew that the time of the Babylonish Captivity was near its Expiration, and so set himself to prayer, and was crown'd with this wonderful success and acceptance.

Thus prayers prevail with God, and yet without any change in him, there being a Configuration, or Concurrence of all things, according to his own unchangeable Will ; His Counsels of old, that are Faithfulness and Truth, are remonstrated to him by the humble, fervent desires of his servants, that knew them to be his Counsels, and who are ordered by the same counsels to enquire, or beseech him by prayer according to them, and therefore by his Spirit, the Spirit of prayer, He draws the parallel lines to his own Intentions upon their Hearts, Desires, and Affections.

I have pursued this the further, because it gives a solution to that Doubt, how God without any change in himself hears prayers ; and also assures us, this prayer being so remarkable, as to be twice us'd in the same words, most certainly bears it self upon

some certain principle, from which we may argue to general practice. The principle it rests upon, must be this: There is an Establish'd order betwixt the *Wrath and displeasure of God; His Fury, and Vengeance, and the Nations, or Families, not knowing, not calling on his Name*: and this is known by very light of Nature. His *Wrath*, according to unchangable Laws, is always prepar'd against those that forsake him, and that Duty they owe to him, as Nations: It had been else a great presumption upon God, and Breach of Charity to the Nations to pray against them; which may also give us account of all those Dreadful Imprecations, and Curses, *David*, and other *Prophets* and Holy men pour out against their own Enemies, and the Enemies of their people; They are founded in their being Enemies to God, his True Worship, Love, and Service, and as such their Final Destruction was decreed against them by the most Righteous Laws of Divine Government, made known unto those Holy men, and so they prayed for it as publique persons, and not out of private Wrath and Revenge: but this by the way. I proceed now in the main Argument.

And this principle I am upon, That the Wrath of God is against the Nations that are without *National Religion*, lyes deeper in a First, and more Original principle, viz. There is an Obligation, a great Duty lying upon Nations, as Nations to know, and worship the True God; For else why should God find fault? why should he be angry, when none had resisted his Will?

From hence it is, That there is a Natural Order established by God, between his Love, and Favour, and a People, and their publique True Religion, because it is the Observation of a Duty, and the Observation of Duty is the fitting us for Blessing, and Favour, as the neglect, and Transgression of Duty cannot be without wrath and displeasure. For thus God hath placed Life and Death one over against another; yet so that Life and Blessing are always first, even as Duty is always before sin: For God never made Death and Destruction, even as he never could be the cause of sin, but they come in by the Failing of our Duty, and so of that Life and Blessedness entail'd on our Duty.

Yet the Obligation to National True Religion is much more evident from these Holy men, praying down Wrath upon them that *know not God*, and that *call not on his Name*; then it could have been from the praying for his Favour to them, that *did know him*, and that *did call on his Name*; because his Favour might have

have been vouchsafed upon Terms much below our substantial and inviolable Duty: As many of the *Jewish Rites* might be Arguments for, and Pledges of Gods gracious Regard to the people, he had so distinguish'd, when the want of those signs would not have argued to the effusion of his Wrath and Vengeance, there being no natural, or positive Duty lying upon any, but the *Jews* to such observances: There may be many Arguments for the Bounty and Favour of God from External Rites appointed by him, and observ'd by his people; though indeed these all refer to their Essential Duty, and argue nothing without it: Yet the contrary will not enforce to the opposite Degrees of Wrath and Indignation, because they are not observ'd, when no substantial Duty is violated. *Uncircumcision, that keeps the Law*, may have in the main the same security from wrath, with *Circumcision that keeps the Law also*. Seeing then there is so great wrath against those *that know not God, that call not on his Name*; It assures us, the Duty, the Obligation, and the Reason of it lye deep, that the omission is so subjected to the Divine Revenges: and it is in this; A society without Religion is a High contempt of God, *a making flesh our arm*, and departing from the Lord, and so from his Favour and Blessing. A principality without an Inscription, a Dedication to the Glory of God, to which all things are to be devoted, is like the building *a Tower up to Heaven*. A sin like the sin of *Herod*, when he let that Sacrilegious Applause sink into him, and gave not *the Glory to God*; and therefore subjects men to be at any time smitten and blasted by God; who has said, *Those that honour him, he will honour; but all else shall be lightly esteem'd*, whether *Nation or Person*. It is not therefore only the Judgment upon the Irreligion of particular persons, of particular Families, that is here intended, though this is included and suppos'd, but especially upon the Irreligion of Societies, knitting and strengthening themselves without the True God; upon Principalities exalting themselves, and not by and with the *Almighty, and Supreme Majesty*.

On the other side, if there be a Duty; an Obligation of being publicly Religious, there is a Blessing upon it, according to that Fundamental Principle; *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him: that Godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come*: And this must be first, because as Righteousness and Duty are before sin, so Blessing and Favour are before Wrath and Displeasure.

sure: Yet Wrath is a more certain Demonstration of absolute Duty violated, than Favour is of absolute Duty observ'd, because the Favour of God is more at liberty than his Wrath, which always depends on strict Justice. All which amounts to the full proof of the great Duty of *National Religion* from this prayer, seeing National Irreligion is *so near the Curse of Divine Fury and Revenge.*

Argum. 2. Having thus far considered National Religion, as it is founded in the very Laws of Nature, and inviolable duty to God. I come secondly, to consider the Wisdom, and unquestionable Rationality of the Divine Ordination *among the Jews*; when by a Prerogative of Power, and Goodness, God would secure the True Religion, after the Nations had so corrupted themselves, and that he had now begun, as the *Apostle* speaks, *to suffer them to walk after their own ways*: He founds his Worship, as it were anew, first in *Abrahams* Family, and from thence commences it into a National State, even as he did the Family, wherein he had plac'd it, and that for the very sake of his True Worship, which *Family* and *Nation* had indeed many peculiars in its Religious Constitution, such as are not to be found in any other, as I shall after account for them; yet in the general, it is an Evidence of the Fitness and Agreeableness of that Model of Humane Society, to the Ends of Religion, and the Acceptableness to God, it should be so devoted.

But because we may think this chusing of *Abrahams* Family, and the *Nation* rising from it, was an Interdict upon any other *Family*, or *Nation*, to institute a publique National Religion, any other ways, than as they *Profelyted* themselves to that one *Nation* and *Family*: It is very observable, there are elsewhere the footsteps of *National*, and *Family Religion*, though more rare in that very time, as in *Melchisedeck*, who was *King of Salem, of Peace and Righteousness*, and *Priest of the most High God*, so incorporating Religion with his Government, the same is to be found in *Jeh*, and his Friends: so that the Erecting a *National Religion* among the *Jews*, did not supersede the obligation of any of the *Nations* to the *National Worship* of God, though in Judgment past our finding out, *He so overlook'd them, as to leave them to themselves, for he never left himself without witness* He ought to be so worshipped, by giving them fruitful times and seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness: He was never far from them, in
that

that he gave them life, and breath, and all things; and in him they lived, moved, and had their Beings; so that they were without excuse, when at any time his wrath was reveal'd from Heaven against them, for not glorifying him as God, and being thankful *Belshazzar*, and his Nation, were obnoxious to God, for not *Glorifying that God*, in whose hands was his life, and breath, and all his ways. Besides those of the Nations that were near the Jews were allowed to unite themselves to the Jewish National Religion, when the Laws of Nature were grown so dark and obsolete among themselves; and though they were the sons of strangers, yet God assur'd them a place in his sanctuary; but because there was not provision enough for the multitude of the Nations within the Bounds of that Religion; it was certainly at all-times lawful and pleasing to God, that they should have Nationally dedicated themselves to the true *Jekovah*, though eminently known then to be the God of Israel: and that they did not so, gave reason always to his Wrath against them, whenever he pleased to execute it.

But I hasten to the third Argument of nearer concernment to us.

The third Argument I derive from the Favour of *Christian Religion*, to National Religion; of which I shall lay down several proofs. *Argum. 3.*

1. Christianity repeals none of the Laws of God that are founded in the very Nature of Things: if therefore National Religion be according to the Rules of Essential Duty towards God, if it be the *Reasonable service* of Nation; It is certain Christianity does not remove it, but restores and exalts it to the greatest perfection: *Christ came not to dissolve any of those Laws*, but to fulfil them, that is, to restore the Doctrine to its just Integrity, where it was falsely gloss'd upon; and if any thing was wanting in the former Revelation of it, to superadd what might render it most complete.

2. Of the same Nature is the second proof, That if God not only for the sake of type, and shadow, which was useful for that State of the Church, but for the sake of the real Goodness and Usefulness of the Thing it self, pitch'd upon the National Form of Religion, by his immediate Revelation to *Abraham* and *Moses*, (as I have already argued), it cannot be suppos'd to be revers'd by Christ: It remains therefore among those things that are written for our Admonition, and Learning, on whom the Ends of the world are come.

3. Chri-

3. Christianity vouches it self a Religion of the most publique Spirit and intention, and came into the world by the High Conduct of God to open all passages for Truth and Divine Knowledge among men; as innumerable places in the Old and New Testament assure us; so that the Gospel most evidently designs it self to be free, and publique, as the Heaven, as the lights of it, and the words of the *Psalmist* may well be apply'd to it: *The line of it is gone throughout all the Earth, and its words to the ends of the world:* so far therefore as Naturalness, and Publiqueness agree, so far the thing is undeniable.

4. Many expressions of the *Prophets* that went before, of our *Saviour*, and his *Apostles* that followed after, have a particular Favour for National Religion. To name some of a multitude: *Christ shall sprinkle many Nations: He is the Desire of all Nations: Go make Disciples of all Nations: All the Kingdoms of the World shall become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.* The *Apostle* magnifies himself, as the *Apostle of the Nations*; He compares himself with the *Holy Priesthood*, while by *Preaching the Gospel*, he was negotiating in the offering up the Nations, a sacrifice consecrated, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, the greatest sacrifice that was ever offer'd to God, except that of the *Son of God, offering himself.* And this is the only instance of the *Ministry of the New Testament*, resembled with the *Priesthood of the Law*, or cloath'd with that Denomination of Priestliness, use hath appropriated to it, and that to no other office but of Preaching to Conversion, *Rom. 15. 16.*

But because I know the proofs from these Scriptures are lyable to be retrench'd by expounding them of the Diffusion of Christianity into the Catholick Church throughout the World, and then calling out of every Nation Converts into particular Societies and Congregations; I shall make an Essay to level the line of them to Nations and Kingdoms, as they are united into such Conspicuous, and Illustrious Bodies of Mankind, with their Principalities so form'd, so compacted, and not only a Diffus'd Catholick Church, or small and invisible Congregational Churches.

1. The Kingdom of Christ can no way attain that Greatness, which it is prophecyed and foretold it shall attain, if it does not allow Nations, as Nations to associate themselves in the profession of it; if it only gives Right to private and particular Churches, or Congregations; and a Diffusive Church, that can no way congregate, which though great in its Spiritual Union, yet arises to no visible

visible Greatness; but as it moving into all parts of the world, congregates it self according to any of the Laws, or Advantages of Humane Society it falls into, and finds prepared for it: The *Messiah* then can never, as is prophesied of him, *have his portion divided him with the great, nor divide the spoyle with the strong*, but must rest in a very low and under-condition of small, private, and particular Assemblies of his servants, professing him; but a *National Christian Religion*, a Religion, as Famous as the name of the most populous Cities, and the greatest Princes and their Territories, in honour to the *Lords anointed*, must not be allowed, no not according to his own Designation. For though the Eminency of the Doctrine, and the Appearance of God with it, does infinitely surmount all created Greatness; yet many places of Scripture compare the Honour and Glory of Christ, as a Prince over Nations, with other Sovereignties, and prefer his; not only in regard of the Heavenliness, and Eternity of it, but as it obtains an Interest and Command in the world. For it is a Government over Nations, as Nations; over the Laws and Principalities of Nations; and not of one only, but many Nations; not indeed in the way of Worldly power, but Divine perswasion: Evidences of Truth, and Reason, Vertue of Holiness, and Goodness, are *the Scepter of this Kingdom, the weapons of this Power*; and this Mountain shall grow greater, and greater, till all the Prophecies are exactly fulfill'd in the Sovereignty of Christ, and the lowest subjection of all Kingdoms to him: the greatest *Mountains* disappearing and becoming nothing before him, when *the fulness of the Jews, and Nations* are come into him. Thus it is a *Mountain set upon the top of the Mountains*; not only in the Eminency of its Doctrine, but the professed subjection of the Governments of the world (that are in Scripture call'd *Mountains*) to it, for his Truth, Meekness, and Righteousness sake: But if Nations receiving and flowing into Christianity, sink it presently into particular, private Assemblies, as it was while under persecution, and that it should be of no more publique Honour, than at such times; the *Mountain of the Lords house* should not be above the Hills, but shaded by them, and that according to the very Constitution of Christianity it self; for the Supremacies stand aloft, but the profession of Christ retires into privacies; yea the worship of the True God, *Creator of Heaven and Earth*, which after the appearance of the Son of God in the world, is only in Christ, must be so far from being *exalted*, as

is everywhere signified, that it must be abated and brought low by the Depressiō and falling down of the *Mosaick Frame*; for then it was settled upon one of the Principalities of the world; and though it be now more diffus'd, yet if it not only be not, but ought upon its own principles to be Established in, and upon the publick profession of a Nation; It has not, nor can have such an Eminency as among the *Jews*, when it had the Awfulness and Majestickness of a Kingdom devoted to that true Worship, making it thereby of much greater notice in the World.

And if Religion may be National, even as Nations themselves are united in a way of order, so must National Religion also be by order compos'd into its Nationalness: and this by the Rules of Scripture and Right Reason.

But let this be no pretence to that Tyranny in Christian Religion, that great Usurpation of Popery; for it is a Sacrilegious Displacing the Honour from Christ upon ostentimes a most unworthy Mortal; those Princes then that are *Minores Corona*, that lessen themselves by giving their Kingdom and power to the *Beast*, must needs diminish the Honour of their profession of Christianity, seeing they have so far stripp'd themselves of their Principalities, that they have them not to dedicate to Christ: The retaining their Honour unvouch'd, unviolate by any creature, and presenting to the Honour of Christianity a Supremacy unprostitute, is the true Glory done by Christian Princes to Christianity.

2. If there were not the Liberty allowed to Nations to espouse Christianity to their Government, and to receive the Honour to themselves of being Religious, and Christian, as Nations; the Condition of Nations were worse than that of the *Jews* under the Law. For now People, as in the Body of a Nation, may not be so happy, as to have the Lord for their God. They may not crown themselves with the chief Glory of Nations, viz. True Religion: *Moses*, we know, often magnifies the State of the *Jews* to themselves, in this particular, viz. the Excellency of their Religion: He uses it as a great Argument, that God loved the Nation; He told them, it was their Wisdom and Honour, before the rest of the Nations round about them, who had reason to defer to them, that they were a great, and a wise Nation, an understanding people, that had such Statutes and Judgments.

Deut. 4.
8, &c.

Now seeing Christian Religion hath the undoubted Evidences of Wisdom, Truth, and Goodness; not only so superior to all the Religions

Religions in the world, as to be the only true Religion; but much superior to that under Administration of the *True Religion* it self among the Jews: It must needs be the happiness of Nations to enfranchise it, as the publick National Religion, by the same Authority whereby they make valid any other Law, or Act, so as to become the act of the Publick.

And we have reason to believe those many expressions of *Ephs.* 2. 14. c. 3. 6. *Breaking down the Partition Wall*, and admitting all Nations to be the *People of God*, and *ekklesia*, a Body together, are intended, not only to signifie that they may unite in lesser Congregations, but in the fullness of National Associations, else they are not received into the same freedoms and immunities that the Jews had; nor could *Egypt* and *Affyria* be so equal with *Israel*, that *Israel* should be but a third with them, whom the *Lord of Hosts* shall bless all alike with no more variation, than *Egypt my People, Affyria the work of my Hands*, and *Israel my Inheritance, Isa. 19.* We may find *Christianity* intended to embrace all Societies of Mankind, it declared it self a Religion that loved them, and, as it were, on purpose to testifie the Divine Approbation of, and the near resemblance between those Civil and Political Unions one with another, founded in the very nature of Humane Society; and that Religious Union, which by the very same Law of Nature follows them as so united, Christianity kept to the very same Tenor of Union it found any where, and twin'd as close about the Cities, Neighbourhoods and Families, made ready to its hand by civil Associations, as it could; not calling men out to Wildernesses, Mountains, or Woods, to be the *Churches of Christ*; or that they should abide in Desarts and Solitudes, when persecution did not drive and force them out; But the *Churches of Christ* are denominated from those Cities and Regions where they are planted, as the *Churches of Ephesus, Corinth, Judaea, Galatia, Macedonia, &c.* yea the *Christians of Achaia*, are called by the Apostle, *Achaia*, as if Christianity were there become the Religion of the Countrey; and the *seven Churches of Asia*, are called those very Cities where they were seated. Wherein it is observable, the *Churches of Cities* are called the Church of or in each City, as one; though it is in a manner certain, they must be distributed into more Congregations for their numerousness; yet they are still called one, because the City was one. But the Regions not being so united in Government, Neighbourhood, or any kind of Civil Union, the distribution of *Churches* easily fol-

*Eph. 2. 14.
c. 3. 6.*

1 Cor 9. 2.

Rev. 1. 12.

lows the distinction easily supposable in their civil state : In Regions therefore we suppose there was no Centre of Union, not in the Churches, which were at distances too great for Coagmentation into one ; nor in the Laws and Government, at least with any respect of order towards Religion ; they are therefore called Churches and not one Church, as they are without any exception in Cities, even where the Apostle names particular Churches in the Houses within those Cities ; yet in regard of the Unity of the City it self, they are comprehended under the one Church of that City.

Now all this speaks the care *Christian Religion* uses not to disturb, but to conform to Civil Societies, and therefore especially to National the chief of those Societies ; and so I close this third Argument for National Religion, derived from the consideration of Christian Religion.

Argum. 4.

National Religion is of great moment and consideration, in respect to the *Day of Judgment* ; for the wrath and fury of God upon those Nations that know him not, that call not on his Name, is to be taken at the full extent and duration in this world, in *that which is to come* ; and so the happiness of Nations, who *have the Lord for their God*, that have the *everlasting Arms* under and about them, spreads it self not only upon Time, but upon Eternity.

It is indeed generally taken for granted, that Nations are only judged as Nations in this world ; yet if we closely examine, we shall find both in Scripture and Reason, very valuable grounds to believe, the *Day of Judgment* shall not only pass upon persons single, but in their Communities, as they are lock'd in with their Associations, and with respect to those very periods of Time, and the Generations into which the Communities and Associations have been distributed ; so that not only the people of every Nation come into Judgment together, but the people of every Generation ; of this or that Nation, come distinctly into Judgment together.

Besides those peculiarities of Sin, or Grace, wherein every man is individual to himself, and no *Stranger* intermeddles, but he *proves* and *enjoys* his own work alone, or bears his own burden : There are also mens interwoven Actions, either good or bad, wherein the Communities, knots of Society, Neighbourhoods, Concurrences with the Nation, Conformities with the Age and Generation, shall be exactly compared, and weighed in the *Eternal Judgment*.

For there is nothing more frequent in the Scripture, than thus to represent

represent the carriage of the day of Judgment: The Nations, whole as Nations, that forget God, shall be turned into Hell, and Egypt and all its company, all its Hosts lye together; the other Nations with their multitude, every one in their proper sorts: The Uncircumcision and those without Law, are judged by themselves; the Circumcision, and those under the Law, by themselves, distinctly. Our Saviour speaks of Sodom and Gomorrah, the men of Nineveh, Tyre and Sidon, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, coming into Judgment, in that Union, in that Community, wherein they were imbodyed here in the world; and the men of that Generation, as they were that Generation.

Ezek. 31.
18, Sec.
Röm 2 13.

I confess it is not so clear, that the happiness and salvation of mankind, is with any respect to the distinction of Nations; because, besides what other reasons may be given, the union of all blessed persons to God and Christ, and of happy Spirits one to another, is so infinitely great, as to swallow up all distinctions; so that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Scythian nor Barbarian, but God and Christ are all, and in all.

And so far as there is any such National distinction, Our Lord being of the Seed of Abraham, in whom all the Families of the Earth are blessed, the bosom of Abraham, the Table of Everlasting Life, at which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sit down, the new Jerusalem, the Israel of God, are the Capital expressions of happiness.

But still there is reason to think the distinction of Nations is not so lost, but that the Holy Seed is as the substance of every Nation, in which it is for ever (as it were by it self conserv'd:) A Seed serves God in every Age, which is accounted to the Lord for a Generation at that time, and when God writes down the people in the Book of Life, he writes them as under the head of such a Nation; this or that man was born there, although they are all enrolled, as Citizens of that common City of Zion, the City of David, from whom our Lord sprang. And though all Christians are one holy Nation, yet it is said of some very glorious, and happy Seats of the Church (of which I will not undertake to determine) that after the distinct Sealing of so many thousands of each Tribe, there was yet an innumerable company, not in a confusion, but in a distinction; so as to be known to be of all Nations, Kindreds, People, and Tongues. All the Nations of them that are saved, are also mentioned in the same Mystical Book, as kept under that distinction.

The Apostle speaks to his Corinthians and The Thsalonians, as certain
glory he

he should meet them under those very names, at the appearance of *Christ*: He prays for *Israel*, as a Nation, that they might be saved; he discourges their falling away and recovery in a national way, for many particular *Israelites* were then called and saved, but not in a national way, as he insists.

Besides all these fair Inducements from Scripture, there is the same urgency of Reason, for the *Day of Judgment* passing upon men, as in Nations and lesser Communities, as upon their single persons; for else their actions can never be judged, the very compliance with the custom of Nations, with the sway of such an Age and time, being the reason of many sins; and the sinful ways of men are so locked into one another, that the *Day of Judgment*, that gives sentence upon all things most righteously, comprehends them together, even as the *Fallen Angels*, the *old World* were judged together, and in common.

Jude. 7th. In *Sodom* and *Gomorrals*, was given a pre-appearance of the final Judgment upon the world, for the *Apostle* tell us they were set forth for an ensample, and that they suffered the Vengeance of Eternal Fire; and we know they suffered in their Community; *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, with all their company, were involved, as in the sin, so in the punishment; and there is no separation except where Repentance, and that with great difficulty, hath made it.

So on the happy side of things, Religious Nations and Communities encourage and assist one another in acts of Love, Service and Duty to God, in Virtue and all Goodness, and in fold their piety mutually, so that on neither side the recompences of Mercy or Justice can be proportioned, but as in Community.

2. There is the same Reason for the last Judgment passing upon Nations as Nations, as for its passing upon private persons, as private persons.

For let any one survey History, and he shall find Nations, as Nations, have escaped the vengeance of God in this world, as much as single Persons; and the same sort of Revolutions, Changes, and final Periods have befallen Nations professing God and Christ, as those that have been enemies to such Profession: It is most apparent in a comparison of the Jews or Christian Nations: Yea generally those that have been called by the Name of God and Christ, have been most speedily punished, as those that God hath most especially favoured of all the Nations of the Earth. The Prophet *Habakkuk's* First Chapter is spent upon this very Subject, of that wicked Nation of the *Chaldeans* so prosperous

prosperous above the Jews, described in many elegant similitudes, and vehemently expostulated from the twelfth verse to the end.

Whoever shall consider the ancient *Romans*, or the *Papacy*, or the *Turkish Empire*, since the rising of it, must needs conclude, that to judge Nations, as Nations, at last, appertains as much to the Paramount Sovereignty or Divine Justice, and more than single Persons.

Nations that have been so great and formidable, and Princes swelling with the height of Pride, and contempt of God and Religion, should in all reason stand in those very Appearances at his Tribunal; with their wise Senates, mighty Captains, Armies, and Multitude about them, and so be Sentenced and Condemned by the *Righteous Judge of all the World, the only Potentate, the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Prince of Princes, even Christ the Son of God, in humane Nature*, else they would not be judged at all as Nations.

For here neither *Love* nor *Hatred* can be known any more to Nations than to single Persons, by any thing that is before us. There is often one event to all, to the *Righteous and Merciful*, and to the *Unjust and Tyrannick Nations*, to the *Good* and to the *unclean People*, to them that *sacrifice to the True God*, and to them that *sacrifice to Idols*.

There are as many Instances of the severity of God against private, particular wicked persons, as against such Princes, Nations, or particular Ages; and of his patience and forbearance to the one as to the other. There are as great examples of the mercy, and favour of God to private, particular good men, as to pious Nations and Governments; and of his severe corrections upon the one as the other. The piety therefore and the wickedness of Nations according to their particular Generations, equally waits for the *last Day*, even as of single Persons.

For though there are Periods Judgment sets to it self; and when sin is come to its height, *Judgment stays no longer*; yet this without a *future Judgment* will not give satisfaction for the Ages of Prosperity and Greatness, the many signal Victories, the stupendious Grandeur many very bad Nations and their Princes have arrived at, and continued in before the *final Calamity* hath overtaken them; any more than dying at last with great circumstances of pain and horror, answers for the worldly prosperity of many a wicked man, if after *Death* there were no *Judgment*. So that especially as to particular Generations, there is the same Reason for the Judgment of Nations, as of particular Persons.

3. If all things were not to be as publickly transacted at the *Day of Judgment*, and to be set upon as open and universal a Theatre, as they were acted upon here, and that before the Congregation of Heaven and Earth at that day; there were not so great reason for an *Universal Judgment*; The *Private Judgment* of Souls might suffice: Nor could there be any reason why Scripture should lay so great weight upon the *Resurrection*, and in the very same Bodies, at least as to the principal parts, and so as that men should be known to be the same persons?

Why thus, If men were not to be presented in the same Circumstances, Relations, Communities, and the most notorious Appearances, wherein they conversed, and whereby they were most known in the world?

Let this then be granted, and it will rise up to States, Governors, Senates, Princes, their Laws and Transactions, with the temper of their Times.

And indeed this setting Persons, their places of Habitation, their Nation, their Times, together; must needs break out with the greatest lustre of Justice, and the Supremacy of Divine Judgment, when every thing shall be called to account, and represented over again, just as it was in this world: Things high and low, publick, and private, national, and personal; but without this all would be dark, private, obscure, and imperfect; notwithstanding the gathering all together to that Tribunal. For very momentous Causes, Circumstances, Aggravations, or Extenuations of Good or Evil, could not be understood: The Pride of Sin and Wickedness would not be sufficiently humbled and abased, nor despised goodness enough raised and honoured, and so would amount to little more than a *private Judgment* as I said before; but Scripture every where instructs us, it is the very design of the *Day of Judgment*, to *show* and *present* the whole Scene of things, and to *set* the ballance of them even in all particulars: It is the *Day*, not only of the *righteous Judgment of God*, but of the *manifestation of it*; every thing is then composed to *show* and *Manifestation*; it is the *appearance of Christ*, whom *God* will then *show* in the highest glory of the humane Nature, and so that his low, despised, humbled, and crucified State, shall also be seen, and the glory triumph over it, to the utter confusion and wailing of all that *pierced him*, whose very *own eyes* shall see him, as *so pierced by them*. It is the *appearance of men* in their Bodies, of Nations in their National Capacities, of all men and things

things in their *Restoration*: For it is the *παλινοστρεψις*, the *Regeneration*, (*Mat. 19. 28.*) to their former state; that Religion and Piety may receive its recompences of Glory, that Irreligion and Wickedness may have its just rewards of Shame and Punishment, and that in the very circumstances wherein each were seen and known, and shall then be remembered to have stood here in the world, though for the generality, very different from the esteem and disesteem they then found.

Lastly, This Representation of the *day of Judgment*, is the most lively, feeling, and sensible Engagement to speedy *Repentance* and *Reformation*, that *our sins may be blotted out*, when the times *αναυξιας*, of Re-enlivening all things shall come from the presence of the Lord: Who would not take greatest care, that when they are sought for, they may not be found? Who would not desire, and so use the most effectual means to appear in *Glory*, and not under *shame and contempt*?

Acts 3. 19.

This is also among the strongest Arguments upon the most honourable Personages and Governors of a Nation, yea upon all that love the honour of their Nation, and desire the glory of it with the *true publick Spirit*, to mind the promotion of sincere Religion, Piety, and Goodness in themselves, together with the State of the People, Times, and Governments to which they belong; since if they desire their Nations Renown in this world, and that their management in it may be transmitted fair in Chronicle, that they may live High in Story; how much more must they, if at all serious desire to make an Honourable Figure in that most Illustrious Representation of the last Judgment, and the Eternal Records of All Things? They and their Countrey together, according to the station and Relation wherein they have stood to it, and the love they have born to it?

And certainly every good man desires by an immutable Instinct, by a Law of Goodness within himself, to be good in a Community, and to be saved in their Salvation, which he earnestly aspires to in and with his own, and his own in and with that: Yea, though he be so low or mean in his Fortunes, Abilities, or Discourse, as not to be in any Advantages for propagating True Religion, yet he hath an inward force to it; and as every good man rises in his Stature and Condition, and influence in the Nation to which he belongs; so in his service to the publick Religion, but especially every eminent, great, truly Religious Person, of a publick Character and a
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of his Nation, hath a most vehement and ardent desire, not only of his own Salvation, but of the Salvation of his Nation, of as many and great numbers, of as universal a Body of it as may be. *Moses* was so high in this, that he desired to be *blotted out of Gods Book of Favour*, that he, rather than his Nation should; and the Apostle *Paul* for *Israel*, his *National Kindred*, wished to be *Anathema from Christ*: The scruples of either of which I will not dispute, being satisfied they express a high and mighty zeal for the *National Salvation*, and which in a degree is to be imitated by the best men.

Therefore such Persons, as *Moses*, *Paul*, and other of the *Worthies* of Nations and People, that have been successful in bringing many to Righteousness and Happiness, shall have (as our Saviour speaks) *Rule over Cities* proportionable to their service; they shall for ever be exalted as Princes over their People in *Eternal Glory*, even as the *Apostles* shall sit upon *Thrones*, judging, (that is) shall be Rulers and Governors over the *twelve Tribes of Israel*.

Those that have not been successful, as *Noah*, *Lot*, *Esfay*, &c. that have yet had the Zeal, the publick Spirit, that was commensurable to the Piety, Religion, and Salvation of their whole Community, shall not, though *Israel* be not gathered, yet spend their strength for nought, their judgment is with the Lord, and their work with their God. They shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, they shall be a sweet savour to God of true Holiness, and Piety, in them that perish, even as in them that are saved.

The glory and happiness shall accumulate upon themselves, though it redound not on the Nation: God makes them of themselves, as it were, a great Nation in the blessedness of Eternity; as he promised *Moses*, if he would have been contented with the destruction of that present Nation of *Israel*. They are reckoned as a Nation by themselves, and not of that Community that perishes: For as the Apostle says, *The Lord knows how to deliver the Righteous out of Temptation*, and so out of the Infamy of a common corruption, and especially that everlasting contempt; and reserve the wicked to swallow it wholly in themselves. Their Reproach their Lord will return upon them for ever, it being turned off from himself and his Servants.

But though there is an infinite wisdom in the Divine Judgment, in rescuing thus his own Glory, and the Glory of his Servants that have been unsuccessful in turning men to righteousness, while they have been faithful with all their Talents, and in all their House; yet the salvation of Men and Nations, is the plain and manifest glory of God, and

and of his most Eminent Servants. Those that are their Converts, are their *Hope now*, and their *Joy*, their *Rejoycing*, their *Crown of Rejoycing in the presence of Jesus Christ, at his coming in that day*; only thus Men of eminency, in holiness, are secur'd against loss, if they save only their own souls, while they *endeavour the good of many, that they may be saved*; they are Crowned with those whom God hath given them, as Children, by being instruments of their Conversion. On the other side, they are assur'd of their *reward with God* in them that perish.

1 Thes. 2.
19, 20.

But further, Every man that is good in a Nation, though his Interest be private, may like the *one poor wise man*, have done all he can to save a City, and therefore shall not be *forgotten* here. If he be a holy, good man, he will not be lost by being alone, nor overseen by being low in the world, though he be but *one of a Family, or even of a City*, yet *God will bring him to Zion, the City of the living God*. Every one shall with *Daniel* stand in his *own lot*; proportionable to what it was here, it shall be in that future state. *God will seek his Sheep out of all places whither they have been driven in the dark and cloudy day, though but the poor of the flock, and they shall stand at his right hand at that great Division of the Sheep from the Goats*.

To conclude this Particular, The honour of Nations themselves, as well as persons, wherein Religion hath prevail'd to such degrees, as to be called *National*, is conserv'd in those that are sav'd, even as the honour of the *Angelick nature* is conserv'd in the *holy and elect Angels*, as the humane nature in the *seed of Abraham, the father of the faithful, of them that are saved in all Nations*; as in *Isaac, the seed of Abraham* is called, as in *Isaac's children, the children of promise are counted for the seed*. Thus the honour of particular Nations is *treasur'd up in the elect* of it; so that if we suppose a Nation without Converts, it is lost, as to happiness, or as if it had not been, as the *Tribe of Dan has no name among those sealed Tribes*, to which we had relation before: And as the order of each *Tribe* is disposed according to the happy memory of the worthies of *every Tribe*, and their more noble Acts, in, or for the True Religion (as is observed by Interpreters): and as there are degrees of Glory to every Christian, according to the excellency of his Graces and services that *abound to his account*; So the case is with Nations and Generations, the more, and more eminent men any hath brought forth, the more it shall be adorn'd at that day.

Rom. 9.7.
&c.

Rev. 7.5.
&c.

Isa: 62. 3. It becomes a *Diadem* and *Crown* in the hand of God, and is, as the Prophet expresseth it, as a *Bride* married by the multitude of her sons: So that the last Glory and happiness of Nations is very greatly concerned in their *common Faith* and Religion, and the nearest participation they have been capable of in one anothers holiness and piety; and therefore the more they can do to enlarge and increase it, the more they add to the *common glory* and *salvation*, and do most ensure their own.

On the other side, Although there be a lessening of honour to a Nation, by the fewness of those that are *saved*, and in the many of those that *perish*; yet it is not so, as that the Glory is counter-balance'd by the disadvantage; for there is a much higher account of Glory to the Goodness, Grace and Mercy of God, to the salvation of Christ, in that excellent state of Gods Creation, in the *elect Angels*, and the *recovered parts of mankind*, in that *new Heaven* and *new earth*, wherein dwells *righteousness*, than there is depression of that Glory in those that *perish*, and their contrary state; so the the Glory of the *Angelick* and *humane nature* it self, and so of Nations, is more conserv'd in those that are *saved* of them, than in those of them that are *lost*; for there is a much more, a much *higher reign of righteousness* and *life* asserted by the *Apostle*, than of *sin* and *death*, although Scripture, and general observation give reason to fear there are more that *perish* than that are *save'd*; and however we cannot unfold the mystery of it.

This then stands as an impregnable argument for *National Religion*: If it conduces so much to the future happiness and salvation of Nations, and so to the more exalted Glory and salvation of all those that are zealous herein: and both these in a more National visible way than things are transacted before our eyes in this world, but that there shall be some such future state, whether at the the *day of Judgment*, or throughout Eternity, we cannot define; yet that it shall be, cannot be denied, when so much of Scripture, so much of Reason concur in it: and so on the contrary, that the irreligion of Nations towards the *true God*, and *Jesus Christ*, whom he hath sent, shall be revenged by the most sensible, apparent infamy, contempt and wrath from *Heaven*, in which, those that have had the most *malignant influence into such irreligion*, shall have a *double measure*: and all this in a National way. I know not what can persuade more to National Religion than so great a consideration. And so I finish this fourth Argument.

The Fifth Argument for National Religion, shall be only a complication of consequential benefits flowing from true National Religion united in, which may indeed be made use of to perswade union in Religion, whether true or false; yet they are only applicable upon true Reason to the true Religion. Argum. 5.

1. National Religion contributes to the most happy state, peace, and union of Nations: *Jerusalem* by virtue of its National Religion, as the *Psalmist* says, was as a *City compact together*; now that which hath a fitness and aptitude, by the very law of Nature and the reason of things, to strengthen and corroborate a Nation, may very justly be chosen by it for its own conservation and happiness, upon that very account; but especially when it is subordinated to better reasons too, and of a much higher nature: Every one therefore should give the advantage to National Peace by consenting in National Religion; so that we lose not the truth of Religion, for the sake of National Peace, which may be supposed too to rise from a National Religion, though false.

But National true Religion is a means fitted by God to the peace of Nations, and such a means as is *acceptable and well pleasing to him*.

First, For the sake of Religion; for Unity in Religion gives excellency to Religion, and makes all the services of it more acceptable, as I have already shewn: It is also *well pleasing to God*, as it cements the peace of Nations; which is of high price with the *God of peace*, and Christ the *Prince of peace*, who hath commanded us to *seek peace and pursue it: To study to be quiet, to live in peace, as much as lies in us, and if it be possible wish all men*; who hath branded the sowing discord among Brethren, as one of the principal Abominations to him, but hath blessed the *peace-makers, owning them as his children*. He hath made *truth and peace the stability of any time*; these are the pillars that are the *Lords*, and he hath set the Nations he loves upon them. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to live thus together in Unity: It is like the precious Ointment of the Sanctuary, and the Dew of Heaven, where it is found; the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

1 Thes. 4.
11.
Rom. 12.
18.
Prov. 6.
19.
Mat. 5. 1.
Psalm 133

Thus Religion, by being National, is freed from the charge of being a design and occasion of disturbance.

Thus the *Hearts of Princes safely trust in it*; thus it becomes the very ligament and sinews of Government, a *pia mater* to the sacredness of Authority, and makes Sovereignty easie and sweet both to Prince and people.

What but Truth can be weighed against this Peace?

And that not all Truth, but Truth dwelling so near the essence of Religion, the very purity of Divine Worship, that as it cannot be sold nor parted with, so it may not be concealed: A man may not have it to himself, but with his Mouth must make confession of it to salvation.

2. True Religion becoming National, hath the defence and security of National Wisdom, Force, and Strength, against false Religion, and its force and endeavours to expel the true, and become National it self. For a Nation divided against it self in Religion, how can its Religious Interest stand? When though the main be agreed, yet if differences of an under nature are managed with high exasperations, it must needs endanger the staple Religion it self, by weakening, dispiriting, and dividing the strength that should ingage for it, while every one takes care for his private sentiments, and is jealous of being undermined, or oppressed in them, the publick and common Religion cannot be environed and defended with that vigour and union.

A Nation united in Protestancy, is the greatest Bulwark against Popery; what can single Interests do in this case? Even Experience teaches those that dissent from one another in many things, even in National Reform'd Religion, to acknowledge this Union the Fort-Royal against the hostile Invasions of Popery, which should conciliate them as far as is possible among themselves.

3. True Religion, as it is National, secures best against those undermining Enemies of Atheism, Heresies, Enthusiasm, wild and monstrous Opinions, Prophaneness, neglect of all Religion, Coldness, Lukewarmness, which take shelter and manage their defence from the divisions in the Religion of a Nation, settled and confirmed into avowed Sects and several parties; but National Union in a true Religion, strikes them both with fear and shame.

4. The benefits and blessings of publick Religion, as before declared, come down upon a Religious Nation, and all the truly Religious parts of it, both in this world, and in that which is to come, according to the strength of the Union in National Religion: And this is an interest far greater than that of Trade, warlike Defence, or the policy of Cities or Kingdoms. Accursed therefore be that Irreligion or Disunion that enfeebls it: He that lives without God in the world, as to the worship of him, and he that prodigally commits waste upon a Religious Principle, is worse than they that by riotous living

living or idleness, do their part to impoverish a Nation: He that upon Division retires from the publick Religion without necessity, takes his Interest out of the National Bank or bottom, or suddenly lets it lye dead: Such kind of partyings in Religion without necessity, are like the *Hetaria* or Cabals in Civil Government, Consultations without respect to the publick, and so the great damage of it an injury of great guilt, seeing we owe so much to the publick.

And so I have done what I intended in the arguing this point: I shall now consider what may be objected to it, as an occasion further to explain this whole Doctrine; and the great Objections I can conceive in prejudice of what I have asserted concerning National Religion, I reduce to these following.

Obj. 1. When God gave the great instance and pattern of *National Religion*, especially as in a *National Church*; how much otherwise did he found it, than is possible to be derived from our Saviours Institution. He begun it in a holy Root, that sprouted out and grew, and flourished into a Nation *holy to God*. By his appointment they met together at *Jernsalem*, in the *solemn Feasts and Sacrifices*, as *publique Ordinances*. The *Priests*, and more especially the *High-Priests*, were in most Authoritative Deputation from God, between him, and that peculiar people, that they might unite all as in *One*. The *Temple, Altar and Holy of Holies*, were as the common Center of all the publique worship; and a great sin it was to have multiplied any of these, and so to have made a Division.

They had *Prophets*, who were their extraordinary *National Ministers*, their Office and Sermons closely relating to the general state. Lastly, their *Civil Magistrates* were under the strictest obligation, to attempt their Government and Administrations to the Religious Laws, given by God to that people.

Besides all this, they had the *Levites* dispersed through their Cities and Villages, to teach, and instruct in the *Synagogues*, the places wherein they assembled for constant exercises of Religion. But now what a silence is there of all these things, or any thing like them, with relation to Nations in our Lords appointment? His *Apostles* called men out of *Judaism*, or *Heathenism*, the then Religion of Nations, into private and particular Assemblies, called Churches, under Pastors particualar to them, without any Rules for Christian Magistrates, or expectation of service from them; which argues, he did not intend *National Churches*; or if he did by the *Prophets* signifie any such, it was not intended they should

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be in this dark and cloudy state, wherein *Antichristianism* has so prevailed; it is reserv'd for some more glorious State of the Church, some more eminent appearance of Christ, wherein such *Prophecies* are to be fulfilled.

2. Hence it came to pass, the only Instances we have in Scripture, of Christian Societies, the discourses of them, the Rules in relation to them, are all fitted to private and particular Congregations; and where there are any such spoken of, they are called Churches or Congregations; so that there is no Association in Christian Religion mentioned, but under the name of a Church, to signify Christian Religious Societies, and Churches, are all one; so that there can be no National Christian Religion, without a National Church: But there is no rule either of a National Christian Religion in the New Testament, or a National Church.

3. A National Church, or a National Religion, must depend upon a National Magistracy; the Church must be gathered in them, the Religion established by them subject to their Laws and penal Statutes; and beyond this, those that cannot be every way compliant with the whole *National Scheme*, are looked upon as enemies to, or disturbers of the peace and Government of the Nation, because the Government and the Religion are incorporate together; whereas the Laws, and Religion, and Churches of Christ, are all in him, and depend upon him only; how far is this from a National Church?

To give first an answer to these Objections together: The Arguments already mentioned do mightily prevail with me that it is impossible Christianity should by any of its influences, so much as suspend so absolute a Natural Duty upon mankind as this, *viz.* to consecrate National Associations to God in National Religion, but that it is always the duty of Christian Magistrates and people to unite in National Christian Religion; Or that the Redeemer of mankind should cut off so great a priviledg of Nations as that, to intitle themselves *Nationally* to God, and his favour and blessing, and to make profession of the wisest and only true Religion in the world; or that the very proper and natural Glory of Christianity, *to make disciples of all Nations*, may not at all times be endeavoured by every particular Nation. However the *Prophecies* may be more literally fulfilled hereafter in the purity and universality of Christian Religion.

This being premised, I come more particularly to give answer.

1. Many

1. Many of these things that are named, as found in the *Church of the Jews*, as a *National Church*, were not yet the Essentials of a Church, as *National* in general, but of that *particular National Church*, and typical of things under the Gospel, as is plain in the exposition of them in the *New Testament*; and more particularly that excellent *Epistle to the Hebrews*: the *Temple*, the *High Priest*, the *Holy of Holies*, the *Altar*, the *Sacrifices*, the *solemn Feasts*, with such like, *serv'd only as Shadows of things to come*; and the want of them argues nothing against National Religion.

2. Those things that were not Typical, or whose main and sole intention was not to adorn and compleat that whole Frame, but rested upon Universal Principles of Reason, Truth, and Duty, can never be abrogated, but are *for our learning*, that we through *patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have National hope in God*, and be obliged in our duty, even as they were. Thus the duty of Magistrates and people towards true Religion, of publick instruction, of publick Ministers of Religion, of care for places of meeting for Divine Worship throughout a Nation, continue still, and need no new commands in the Gospel.

3. As to the first planting of Churches by drawing Christians into particular private Societies, it amounts but to thus much, that Christ the Lord of the Church did not found his Church universal as necessarily diffusing it self into Nations; nor could it in reason be so.

For seeing it was in Divine Providence, for great and weighty Reasons, of which it is not proper now to speak, intended and ordered, that hundreds of years should pass over Christianity, ere it had the favour and protection of Supreme Christian Magistrates, there must have been for that space no Religion or Church, if there had been no other Form but National. The Church of Christ therefore, though it was in those days within Nations, Cities, Towns, and Villages, yet of low stature in comparison of National Religion, till the Reign of Christian Emperors, considerable indeed in it self, and its diffusion through so much of the world, but not acknowledged by Laws or Governments, till long after its first entrance. And at all times upon the change of a Christian Magistracy into a Pagan, an Apostate, an Heretical, or Idolatrous Succession, or the complex of all, *Antichristianism*; which early invaded the Church, and even covered and oblcured it in succession of time; the Church of necessity must fall back into such a low state, and sub-

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fiſt upon its obedience to the Law of Chriſt, and its own prudential accommodations to the ſtate of Times, without the Magiſtrates care and protection.

Our Saviour therefore took care of the Catholick Church, which is of abſolute Divine Inſtitution, which is founded in that promiſe, *The gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*: To which belong primarily all the great and glorious expreſſions of Scripture; to which are given originally *Paſtors and Teachers*, to propagate, promote, build up, and ſtrengthen it; and ſhall by virtue of *Chriſts aſcenſion far above all heavens*, be certainly continued to it, *till we all come to the unity of the Faith of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the full meaſure and ſtature of Chriſt* in all his members. All other Societies of Chriſtians are but little images and representations of this, in theſe its excellencies; and the more they participate of it, the more truly are they the Churches of Chriſt; But becauſe this is too diffuſ'd for one Model, for one Frame to comprehend, there is therefore allowance given by Chriſt for leſſer Associations of this Catholick Church, from the nature of the thing; and becauſe of the diſcountenance of Nations and worldly powers at firſt, and ſince upon true Chriſtianity: Our Saviour therefore, *Matth. 18. 18 &c.* expreſſly fixes the promiſe of his Divine Preſence in the ſmalleſt parts of this Church, where *but two or three are gathered together in his Name*, he hath aſſured, *he will be in the miſt of them*; ſo that it is hence evident, the whole neighbouring diſcourſe centers in the leaſt Aſſemblies agreeing in Chriſtian Religion: For though it ſuppoſes firſt a greater number, (*the Church, and two or three Witneſſes* being contradistinguished) yet as it were in proſpect of the great ſewneſs upon ſome exigencies of Chriſtians praſtiſing the duties of Chriſtianity together, it brings down the promiſes of Audience in their appeals to heaven, and preſence with their whole worſhip and ſervices to the ſmalleſt numbers, not by way of limitation to, but encouragement of ſo ſmall a number. And it is very obſervable, the very ſame declaration of Chriſt to the Apoſtles, *whoſe ſoever ſins you remit, or bind*, by the true Doctrines of the Goſpel, *ſhall ſtand good in heaven*; the very ſame is ſaid here to the ſmalleſt Societies of Chriſtians as to their Judgment and determination upon their own members, according to the Laws of Chriſt concerning the offences that fall out among themſelves, having the ſame Doctrine to proceed he committed to them, even as to the Apoſtles themſelves: Churches
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es are *Pillars* and *Rocks* of *Truth*, even as the most Excellent Ministers; and either, or all being no more, but *Præcones*, each in their kind, or Publishers of the Will of Christ, and his Truth declar'd in his Word, in the vertue of their being parts of the Catholick Church.

Now the Reason why our *Saviour* pitches upon so small a number of *Christians*, agreeing, is certainly this, because he would appoint no other form to his Church, than such as could live, as could subsist under any Civil Government whatever, whether friendly or unfriendly to it. He gave it no other shape, but what it might attain and keep under any state of Civil Laws, under any enmity it met with in the world.

And this was most necessary, because the Church of Christ was not confin'd to one Nation, as the *Jewish* was, whom God in a peculiar manner singled out, and manag'd to the state of a Kingdom, and Nation, by a mighty power, and out-stretched arm, and conserv'd by the same, ruling it with an immediate sensible presence, after he had form'd it by precise Laws, and settled the just bounds of all Officers in their Office, and appointed them the place of the exercise of it; whereas the Christian Doctrine being indifferent to every Nation under Heaven, it did, as it made its progress, convert certain numbers to it self at first, which had no priviledg of humane Laws or Powers, but the edg of all turn'd against it; so that the Form of Churches was compos'd to all the vicissitudes of Providence they were to undergo; and that in all reason, must be in case of necessity, the very least of Societies of Christians, *Two, or Two or Three* (as our Saviour significantly points upon small Societies) for such are most fitted to the worst of conditions that could befall; lesser, and single bodies moving every way, and shifting for the gaining opportunities for the assembling themselves, and preserving their relation one to another, in the discharge of mutual duties, much more easily than any greater associations could; for our Saviour intended all for use, not for Form; he minded not *Nominal, Titular Bishops* and *Churches*.

Thus far I have pleaded the appointment of Christ, that the smallest numbers of Christians may agree and associate, and be assured of his presence.

But now, that this appointment is in bar of greater Societies of Christians, is by no means to be granted; for it is most apparent, our Saviour design'd all things under the Gospel should be

restor'd to the Law of Nature, and the true Reason of Things.

Now according to that, the first End of all Society, is the enjoyment of True Religion, in more than solitude.

This desire of enjoying true Religion in Society, extends it self from the least of Societies, to the greatest, that are not too great for the Ends of Society : Our Saviour therefore, as he gave no Frame of positive Laws, or Worship, no *Pedagogy* of Precepts, so no Institution of Bounding Churches, but that in case of straits and exigencies his true Religion may be administred in the very smallest of Societies with confidence of his Favour and Presence ; when it hath freedom, it may enlarge it self further and further ; and if it have favour of Nations and Governments, ascend to the greatest ; yet with this reserve, That if in any time or place National Christianity varies from the true Original Christianity, as often it hath been found to do ; so that it cannot, even in substantial things, be consented in with a pure Conscience, privater Congregations, even to the most particular, are always ready for Christians to retire into ; for so the Laws of Nature allow, where the Publick is not safe ; and yet when the whole is not corrupted, nor liberty of joyning without commixture with those Corruptions denied, there may yet be, there ought to be no Separation.

Thus the greatest Societies are not in bar of the least, when True Religion requires them.

Thus the least are not in bar of the greatest, when Christianity is at full freedom ; for it is closely allied with that *Wisdom, whereby Kings ought to Reign, and Princes to decree Justice ; by which Princes ought to rule, and Nobles, yea all the Judges of the Earth, with that Wisdom, which rejoices in the Habitable parts of the Earth, and hath its delights with the sons of men.*

I have therefore before observed, That Christian Religion at the very first joyn'd it self, as near as it could, to all Humane Societies made ready to it, as Families, Villages, Regions ; and so far as the Rage of Persecution would permit Christian Societies, united themselves unto Distant and National Correspondencies among themselves.

Now it hath been so unhappy indeed with the World, that in few Instances there hath been a Good State of National Religion to yield a full, conscientious Compliance with. Yet this will no more argue against the Thing it self, than it does against any other of the wise and good Ordinations of God, or against the *Jewish Church,*

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so immediately govern'd by God, and yet so often, and so notoriously corrupted in *Judah*, and more generally in the *Ten Tribes*; and yet to shew how, to the very utmost, without following a multitude to do evil, we ought to joyn with any that are good in a Nation, and with any thing that is good in National Religion, when *Elijah* had, as it were, deserted his place, and the good influence his being in publick might have had, and that God found him alone; He did by way of Reproof ask him, *What he did alone in the Wilderness*, and inform'd him of a greater number that had not bowed to *Baal*, than he knew of, with whom he might joyn himself.

1 Kings
19. 9.

If Corruption would argue against any good Appointment, or Ordination of God, it would argue against *Churches* of the very first Form, or Constitution; those *Churches* in the *Revelation*, whose Corruption is severely tax'd and threatned, yet are without any Censure as to their Constitution; and while Separation from those *Churches* is not so much as intimated, yet a Separation from Impurities is highly commended, and promised reward. *Those Names in Sardis, that had not defiled their garments*, are assured they should walk with Christ in white, for he judg'd them worthy.

Rev. 3. 4.

From whence I conclude, no Form of Churches can recommend things disagreeing from the word of God, how truly form'd soever those Churches be; for Churches are constituted for joyning in those things that are agreeable to the Will of Christ, not in those that are not; and yet Separation from Corruptions does not necessitate Separation from Churches, while there are any Parts of Divine Truth and Worship preserv'd pure to unite in; so great are the Obligations that lye upon all sincerely Religious, to make true Religion as publick as they can in the several Societies that are found to ingraft it upon.

Now that every Society, that is the seat of True Christian Religion, is in the language of the New Testament, A Church, I allow, and therefore will briefly inquire into the Scripture-notion of a Church.

And I find the Original word taken out of the *Septuagint* of the Old Testament, which translates the *Hebrew Kahal* by *Εκκλησία*, which our Translators in the Old Testament, as generally render *Congregation*; although in the New Testament, what is in the quotations out of the Old Testament in the *Greek Εκκλησία*, they render *Church*: so that from the whole it is very plain, as the

Universal, or *National Assembly* of the people of *Israel* was called *Εκκλησία*, or the Church, as by St. Stephen, *Acts* 7. 38. where he speaks of the whole Body of the *Israelites in the Wilderness*: so the *Universal Assembly of Christians*, consider'd as in the Catholic Church, is call'd by our Saviour and the Apostles *Εκκλησία*, that is, *The Congregation*, by way of Eminency, as Holy Records are *The Scripture* or *Writing*, and the Volume of Scripture, *The Bible* or *Book*, as the glad tidings of Christ, are the *Εὐαγγέλιον*, the *Evangel*, or *Gospel*; so the Church is *The Congregation*: And as lesser Congregations of that Church of the *Jews*, that did not comprehend the whole Body, are call'd *The Congregation*, or Church; even so lesser Societies of Christians are call'd *the Congregation*, or Church; in allusion to which our Saviour says, *If two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them.*

συνοχὴ
vol. a word
of like
Importance.

So that the Univerſal *πᾶν* of Christians ſeen only together by God; and particular Aſſemblies of Christians, that meet together under each others eye, are in the phraſe of the New Teſtament, *Churches*. Even as the *whole Aſſembly* of the *Israelites in the Wilderness*, when they were all under one view is by St. Stephen, as I obſerv'd, call'd the *Church*; and the *Congregations*, after they were become a Nation, though they could not all then meet together, are call'd the *Church* alſo, becauſe they were all under one Law and Inſtitution, all partakers of the ſame Rights and Priviledges, and ſo indeed all *particular Churches* of Christians are but the *Catholic Church* in leſſer Aſſociations, as the circumference of Heaven is the ſame, though in ſo many different *Horizons*; As light is the ſame, though variously modell'd by its ſeveral Receptions; as the Ocean is one, by how many ſeveral Denominations ſoever it be diſtinguiſh'd from the ſhores it waſhes, or the channels, or other ſituations it reſts in; ſo this Church is often ſpoken of as *one Church*, and as ſeveral *Churches*, as the Sea is one and ſeveral Seas, they being ſo much every way the ſame, as to differ only in the Univerſality.

But whether a Nation united in Chriſtianity may be call'd a *National Church*, having many diſſents of opinion appertaining to it, and not poſſible to be decided by expreſs Scripture, there being no *Chriſtian Nation* under Heaven in thoſe days of the New Teſtament, wherein it was written; I ſhall leave wholly in the mid-
dle, and only obſerve two Things concerning this Controverſie:

i. That there can no great matter accrue to either side of it, by deciding for, or against a *National Church*.

For allow a *National Church*, or if you will, a *Congregational Church*, agreeing in any thing, not agreeing with the Laws of Christ, or if either of them wants any thing necessary to our Obedience to all the Laws of Christ.

In the first of these Cases, Christians may and ought to retire from the Irregularities of any such Church, either *National*, or *Congregational*, that they may be pure from Corruption.

In the second Case, Christians must find out the ways and opportunities, so far as is possible, whereby they may perform all the Duties commanded by Christ, though they separate from either of those *Churches*, no further than to those ends.

But if there be a Corruption in the Main, or a Defect in the Vitals of the Doctrine, or Worship of Christ, in either Notion, or Churches that will not be upon due Remonstrances reform'd, then if according to the Institution of Christ, Christians gather into Assemblies, though lesser; though but of *Two*, or *Three*, they are assur'd of the Presence of Christ; and no inconvenience of *Rendering the Body of Christ*, or *making Divisions in his Church*, shall condemn them; for the Society deserted is not *his Church*, but the Society that does desert is *his Church*, supposing it retires sincerely in obedience to the Laws of Christ.

On the other side, Suppose a *National Church*, not of the Ordination of Christ in the Gospel, as under that Name or Notion; yet if that stand good, which I have endeavoured to demonstrate, that every Nation, to which the Gospel is preach'd, is bound by the Laws of God establish'd in Nature, and by the Laws of God and Christ in his Word, to plant true Christian Religion upon its National Union; It will be still every Christians duty to joyn in, unite himself with, encourage and promote all that *True National Christian Religion*, and not to separate from it, any further than the Laws of Christ oblige him, that he may yield Obedience to all those Laws: For it is the absolute Duty of every member of a Nation to seek the Eternal Salvation of his Nation in his sphere, as the Apostle Paul did of the *Jews* in so high an Orb, when he profess'd his *great heaviness and sorrow of heart, even to the wishing himself accurs'd from Christ, and prayed with his hearts desire, they might be sav'd*. On account of which, in so many things he became to the *Jews as a Jew*, and wrote that *Excellent Epistle to the*

the Hebrews; It being for that very Reason to me most probable, it was his, that he might make good all those great professions of Love to them; for though it was peculiarly directed to the *Christian Hebrews*, yet it had an aspect upon the whole Religion, and people of the *Jews*, as the scope of Adjusting all the *Mosaic* and *Jewish* Law to the Gospel-Mediation, makes plain, and so was in it self most proper for the Conversion of that Nation, as a Nation, seeing their own'd and gloried in *National Religion* truly understood, led to the *Christian Religion*, justly now to have been their *National Religion*, if they had yielded obedience to their own Laws rightly interpreted.

Now if *National Religion* be an undoubted obligation upon Nations, and the members of Nations, so far as it is true; Those Laws, those Officers that are, though not ordain'd by Christ, yet not contradictory to his Ordination, but necessary, according to Rules of Right Reason, to the Establishing *True Religion*, as *National*, must be submitted to also, upon the account, and for the sake of that *True Religion*, as *National*: But if *National Religion* wander from *Truth*, that Fundamental Liberty establish'd by Scripture, and Laws of Nature, must be always preserv'd, that I before asserted, as giving Right to retire from all Societies not united in *Truth*, according to the Degrees of their defection from it.

But for the further justifying *National True Religion*, I will in the next place observe from Scripture the Uses, and great Ends of *Churches*, and see how far *National Religion* may be accommodated to them.

For Churches are not therefore appointed, that men may Arbitrarily, and Fancifully chuse, which, or what sort they will be of: but that the true Reasons and Purposes of them may be observed and complied with; and they are these Three.

1. That there may be a Generation of men in the world, in the same Faith and Worship of God in Jesus Christ, according to the Scripture, however dispers'd, at whatever distance soever remote, yet united in the same Doctrine; Prayer, Preaching, Praising God in the Sacraments, and if opportunity allows and invites it, in the same actual Worship, and at all times closely compacted in a virtual and mystical Communion with one another, the same spirit running through all, uniting all to Christ, and God, and one with another, joyn'd in the same love, and sympathy of joy in the prosperity,
and

and of sorrow in the afflictions and sufferings one of another, and with all readiness in yielding the fruits of mutual Charity, Mercy and Compassion from one end of the earth to the other, every true Christian being the compassionate *Samaritan* to every other Christian, and not *Jewishly* distinguishing his mercy to his own Sect, Party, or Church; and in cases of corruption and defection from the Laws, and Word of Christ, there is to Christians, a mutual power of remonstrating against those corruptions, and that defection, by arguing, expostulating, censuring the evil of them; yea, and Authoritative denouncing the Judgment of God and Christ upon them; for that Charter of Christ, to the true Preachers of the Gospel, to the true Churches, stands good as to Ages, so to all parts of the true Church, *Whose sins ye remit, are remitted*; &c. viz. by solemn Declarations out of, and according to the Laws of Christ, even to the utmost distance, wherein any rational possibility of extending such Remonstrances and Declarations, with success and effect, can be found: there is not only power, but an incumbent duty to do it.

This Union now is of uncontrollable Divine Right. Thus much of National Religion, a National Church can by no means be denied to a Christian Nation, seeing to be thus of the Church, is absolutely necessary to salvation: Every man that *shall be saved*, being *certainly added to this Church*, the entrances into which, in deed, and in truth, are by the saving Graces of the Spirit of God, and in the judgment of Charity, by a serious profession: And this is that *Catholick Church* that comprehends all lesser Unions, but excludes, or denies none, much less can be excluded by any. As therefore every one must be of the *Church Catholick*, and Nations ought to be Christian Nations, and protect that profession: So this very *Catholick Church* in every Nation, where it is truly found, carries with it the name of a Church; and as a Nation is by it self, and its own Civil Union, denominated a Nation; so the union of Christians must be the Church in that Nation; for it is the *Catholick Church* in its universal diffusion, running through this, or that particular Nation, and all the virtues and duties of the Catholick Church ought to be exercised in it; and if any one denies this, he denies the Catholick Church of greater moment than any particular Church can be.

2. All the closest and most constant exercises of Christian Religion, that Christians are to exercise one with another, that cannot be

be exercised but in Society; of this kind, are all parts of the publick worship of God, Prayer, Preaching, Sacraments, which are indeed, or ought to be the same for nature throughout the whole Christian Church, but must be actually perform'd in particular Societies: Now these Churches may be solemnly erected, and constituted by *agreement*, but they are also founded, and even grow out of the very nature of the thing: for the close Neighbourhood of Christians one with another, they having continual knowledge of, and acquaintance one with another, and thereby daily opportunities of agreeing in that publick worship of God, and their common profession, all these engage, and also incline them to unite, whether in greater *Families*, as the Apostle speaks of *Churches in the Families of Christians*, or in Villages, or in greater Congregations of Cities, one or more; still the obligation is unavoidable: The necessity of Duty that lyes upon Christians to perform these Acts of Worship in Society, and the Law that is upon all Society (and Societies must needs grow out of this frequent conversation) to dedicate it self to God, make it absolutely necessary, that from the neighbourhood of Christians should arise particular Churches.

And who then can deny, but that there may be an Union, and further, that there ought to be an Union of a Nation, agreeing with it self, as in the same Government, Laws, National Constitutions, and commerce in a more frequent and free conversation one with another; so in Religion, when the parts of it profess the same true Religion, and desire to worship God in the most publique way they can? or who can deny, that a Nation may give name to a Church, seeing the very Cities give name to Churches, where there was a number of Christians, acting together according to the Laws of Christ, given to his Church?

The obligation to true Religion, to publique Religion, is undeniable. The opportunity of agreement is the same, and may be transacted in the same mannner all other National agreements are.

And what is a Church but a Society agreeing in all Acts of true Religion, according to the Laws allowed by Christ, having no other Form but that of the Catholick Church, distinguished by the particular Societies or places where they reside.

I acknowledge Two things are necessary to particular, by the nature of particular Societies, and the places where they resided Churches.

Churches. 1. Consciousness, or mutual knowledge of persons and their worship. 2. Consent. This our Saviour teaches in that expression, if *Two of you shall agree*, Mat. 18. and indeed not only in particular Churches, but even in the *Catholick Church* it self these things have their resemblance, but with this difference: *In the Catholick Church* the Divine Spirit running through all, knows them all that truly belong to it, and every one of them, one for another; and by their true Faith they all are united in closest consent, in all things necessary to salvation, one with another, which *Faith is kept from failing* by the same spirit in them all that are truly of it.

But because there must be yet a more particular understanding, that Christians have one with another, that they may joyn in the same Religious Acts, and mutually assist one another in them; therefore the union of the *Catholick Church upon Earth*, though it be the greatest, the most Religious Society, the most strongly banded and cemented; yet is not sufficient, because there is not that consciousness, or mutual knowledge of, and consent in one anothers Faith and Worship in distant parts of the World, that is necessary to the *Glorifying God and Christ in particular Churches*: This is one great reason too why the *Church-Triumphant*, though inseparably united with the *Church-Militant*, and every part of it, though more acceptable and prevalent in all its Adorations; yet cannot be communicated with actually, and explicitly; we may not solicit such a communion with it here on Earth, because we are not conscious or knowing of any such particularities in their State, or Action, as should ground it; nor are we assur'd, that they are conscious of any of our particularities: *Abraham, the Prophets and Apostles* are, for ought we know, wholly ignorant who we are, when we pray, or are exercis'd Religiously: There is a thick and dark Vail drawn betwixt the Church in Heaven and Earth, as to such particular Communion; *The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit* are only certainly and particularly known to us in that Higher Region; of them we are only assur'd, *They know us, and all our actions.*

To ascribe the Honour to any other of the *Invisible Church*, is to *Idolize* them, as well as to *thrust into things we have not seen or known.*

Thus freely I acknowledg, the closeness and easiness of Society, of mutual understanding, and consent with one another, is the

Foundation of particular Churches: Those Duties of mutual Exhortation, Assistances, Counsels, and when it is necessary, Reproof one of another, besides the constant meeting in publick worship; That necessary severity of disowning in cases of great, or incorrigible offence, such persons as walk in practices contrary to the Rules of Christianity; not being possible, but in the nearest conjunction one with another, that the State of mankind allows at the same time to be, as publick too as it may be: The duties of Pastors and Teachers towards the people, and of them towards those that *are so over them in the Lord, which consist in watching for their souls, as those that must give an account for them*; and those souls therefore yielding obedience to those Rules of the Word of God, the Administring of which is stil'd a *Ruling*.

All these require a particular presence one with another; and in such a proportion of number one to another, that the principal Duties may not be defeated by the over-number, but that the services of all, one to another, may extend to all, may comprehend all, may continually pass, and re-pass between all, and in which all may continually demonstrate their *consent and agreement*.

But yet all these things cannot be in bar of a National Religion, seeing that a Nation, as I have already said, hath, and undeniably must have a National Union; and if True Religion be fixed there, and carried along with that Union, it may well be call'd a National Religion at least, and without any injury a National Church; the Agreement in the one carrying also an Agreement in the other, makes it so. And as in such a National Union, though the standard of all things, as of the whole state of Law, Judicature, Trade, Business, Military-strength of a Nation, be preserv'd in Capital Cities and Courts, yet by the care of Government they are all in due proportions distributed, as the Blood in the veins by fit Channels to every particular, as it were in circuit; so the publick agreement in Religion settles the Religious Interest of a Nation more eminently in those things that do most represent the consent of the whole in it; yet with due care of every part, and member of the Nation, to bring it home particularly to them, and making the mutual intercourse in it free and open to all persons, in all places where they have occasion to pass up and down, and maintain an intercourse one with another, that wherever they are, or have occasion

sion to be, they may enjoy the Freedom of publick Worship and National Religion, to which at all times they give a knowing, and even conscious Vote that agree in it, the Assemblies being as it were in view, under a sufficiency of *Masters* of the *Assemblies* of the Nation together; and as National Union does not swallow up lesser, or even Family Union; no more does a National any lesser Church or Religious Society, except by mens own fault: And wherever men thus united come in the Nation, they gladly lay hold of the opportunity of joyning with any other particular Assembly to which sameness of language and manners, give them ready admission besides particular knowledge; and that National Religion cannot be so very particular as congregational, is no more reason to deny National, and rest wholly in Congregational, than it is to deny Congregational and rest in Family Religion, or to deny Family and rest in Personal Religion, because these are each closer than other.

3. A third end of Churches comes to be considered, that more particularly enforces *National Religion*, and justifies its *Nationality*, viz. That there may be a more illustrious, famous, and remarkable offer of Religion to notice and observation, for the drawing in, and congregating others to it. Thus a *Church* is a *Pillar* and *Ground*, or *Seat of Truth*, and a *magnificent House of the Living God*: And what more advantageous to this end, than a Nation united in the True Religion, which we know hath greatly the odds of particular Congregations, in this Illustriousness and Magnificence? nor does this run out yet to the building the *Babel of Rome*, that would mount up as a *Tower to Heaven*; or as too ambitious *Pyramids*, that are often rebuked with Lightning from Heaven, for coming too near it; seeing, as I have before shown, such an Universality enforced is destructive to all the ends of publick Religion, Humane Society being so bounded by Nations, though all the Treaties of Nations of the same True Religion, may be managed to give it the honour due to it, that can be procurated in such Treaties.

So much then as National exceeds, and extends it self beyond any narrower compass, and yet rejoyns it self to and with it self, after the manner of particular Congregations; so much does it partake of the magnificencies of Scripture concerning the publickness of Christian Religion and the Catholick Church, and yet returns into the closeness of particular Churches with themselves, and is the just point betwixt the Tyranny, Ambition, and endlessness of Po-

pish Universality, and putting Christianity under a Bed or Bushel.

National Religion, and National Union in it, is as a city set upon an Hill, that cannot be hid; as a candle set upon so exalted a candlestick, that gives light to all within it self, and about it, even as far as the Fame of that Nation reaches.

The Churches, much more, as rising up into a National State, are the Glory of Christ: As therefore, though we may be in some regard more exact in the most private, we go out of our Personal Religion into Family Religion, out of our Family Religion into Congregational, and as the Christians at first (most probably) according to the Laws of Humane Society, went out of Congregations, into Confociation of Churches in Religion; so we out of all these where National Union in true Religion allows it go into that National State, that we may build the honour of Religion to the highest, in so sensible and understanding a Consent and Union in it, so publick an acknowledgment of God; and though hereby it be as a Net that draws in bad as well as good, even visibly and apparently; yet when we consider the possible care against it in particular Congregations, though still National, when we further consider the state of the Jewish Church, of Corinth, the state of the Apocalypstick Churches, the doubt will not be so cogent, as to move National Religion out of the Nature of things.

The only remaining Doubt is, that thus National Magistracy becomes as the Head of such a Religion, the National Religion is gathered and united in the Magistrate and his Laws, and that which should only be united in, and depend upon the Laws of Christ, becomes subject to another Head; on pretence of which Magistrates have been attempted on too with force to bring their power to true Religion.

The Answer I give to this shall be very brief, in three Heads.

1. I always own any pretence taken from exalting Christ and his Kingdom, to enforce Civil Powers, to ratifie truest Religion into National Constitutions and Laws, is most destructive of the Kingdom of Christ which is not of this world, that is, to use force for its own promotion; and utterly subverts Government, seeing private persons may under this shelter and disguise, rise up, and invade, and disturb any Civil State or Government whatever: When Religion is our Birthright by our Laws, it may be by the same Laws defended; when it is not Prayers and Divine Reasons

are

are the only way of introducing it into Nations: Beyond this is nothing but Popish, Antichristian Ambition, or wild and cursed Enthusiasm, with all their salvage effects.

2. Where there is National Religion, even the National Authority is first Christianiz'd; so that there is no Headship, no Foundation, but Christ and his Laws taking place upon a National State in profession of him. If the Christianity then be removed by falsehood taking place instead of Truth, the Nationalness stays; but the Religion, *the Candlestick is removed*, the Church is departed from it, and retires where it may be enjoyed in its own Truth. The form of the Church is the very same with that of the Catholick Church and Congregations: As it is National, the Headship, Organization, is no other than National, but no more than the City of *Corinth*, or other Cities or Regions, made a Church of *Corinth*, or those other Churches; no more do National Laws or Magistracy make the National Religion. Christianity, if received, settles there; if not received, or afterwards expelled, leaves Laws, Magistracy, Cities, to themselves, and so it deals with Churches, or Forms of them, of what kind soever.

3. All Union in True Religion is free, rational, voluntary. It owns no compulsion of Laws or Magistracy, except in things morally good or evil; so that in this only is the difference from National Agreement in other things, that of Religion is voluntary, and by consent. Princes and Governors may be *nursing Fathers* and *Mothers*, by honorary Rewards and Encouragements; they may give all freedom to the true Worship of God, and protect it by Laws; they may since it in with the strict observation of all moral observances; they may offer, and take care for the persuasions of Religion to be addressed to all their Subjects. Many such demonstrations of their Love to true Religion are allowed by God, but *despotically* to command, or compel, is not of the nature of True Christian, though National Religion. Christ's *Kingdom not being of this world*, refuses even the Magistrates Sword, much more that of private force, for the propagation of its most proper Interests. Our Saviours Religion hates all things of violence and cruelty, *it is not of its Spirit*, he does all by instruments of his own. And if Nations have made their Religion, yea the Religion of Christ, an essential of their Government; yet if it be not according

cording to the rule of Christ, Obedience to, and the good opinion of that Government, is a lower and lesser Interest than Truth and Obedience to Christ: Christ never intended Christianity for a Politick Engine or Expedient; yet for the conservation of Government, in its full Rights, there is not a more concernful point of Christian Religion, than the whole Doctrine of Patient Suffering with its reasonableness; though it is unhappy for those Rulers, that put Christians upon the exercise of it, unhappy is that Power, that is sealed to *wish Martyrs Sufferings*: Yet every man owes to God a strict account, why he is not of the National Religion; what reasons counterbalance to him the great reasons given for National Religion, and therein shall receive *his Sentence from Christ*. If any, upon just reasons, desert a Congregation, though but of two or three (as I have at large set out) is a little *Sanctuary* reserved to them by Christ, with a faithful promise of his presence, where it cannot be enjoyed in greater; which are else, though with some disadvantages in all other regards, to be preferred for their publickness, and not without great reasons to be refrained from, or deserted. If the Reasons are not of weight, they stand at the *Judgment Seat of Christ*, who are guilty of a Schism against the Laws of Christianity, the Laws of Natural Religion, the Laws of Humane Society, and that according to the malignancy of it.

To draw this Discourse now to a Conclusion, let me subjoyn some Rules by way of Inference, of certain good effect, to the management of so great an Interest, as I have represented National Religion.

Rule 1. That the *Religion* offered for *National*, should in the substantial of it be all of clear, and undoubted evidence from the Word of God, and sound reason from it; and in indifferents, or necessarily adhering circumstances prepared by so publick a Spirit, as to project least of doubt and scruple; that as Articles of Faith should be so fram'd, as to beget no dividing Controversie, but leave room to the particular Judgments of Men, where points absolutely necessary are secured; so all things of external mode or form, should be so freely and generously design'd, that every mans particular apprehension may be most at liberty, without which the probabilities of the *National Religion* are surpris'd.

Rule

Rule 2. That in Circumstantial of Religion, what is prepared and settled, so that it cannot be alter'd by any private dispose, nor allowed to any private choice, without scandal to the publick; Every man should consider his *Liberty of Conscience* on one side, as on the other, to preserve himself from scruple, as in the *Apostles* instance of *eating*; There is liberty on one side to *eat all things*, but this does not determine to a necessity of *eating*; that were not liberty: If therefore there be a good reason, an expediency *not to eat*, the liberty is more conserv'd in *not eating* than in *eating*: So it is in the use, or not use of all indifferent things. Where then (as to the case we are now upon) the advantages for publique Religion incline this way, or that way, to the use, or not use of Indifferent Things, It is our greatest liberty, to move our selves that way, and not to be deterr'd with the suspicion of the loss of it by so doing.

This seems to be the *Prophet Zachariahs* resolution, concerning the *Fasts*, wherein those that would have them laid down, and others would keep them still a foot differ'd. He first shews them of no value with God, then bids them love the *Truth* and *Peace*, *Zach. 8. 10.* For though outward Forms, Uniformity, or Variety in them, are of no account in themselves with God, but either way in the Uniformity, or the Variety; *They that serve God in spirit and truth*, are accepted of him; yet the angry dissents and disagreements that dis-joyn the minds of men, and disable the Union of Divine Worship, is like the *covering the Altar with tears of complaint*, and makes the offering unacceptable. That there may be the Unity God is delighted in, without Uniformity, is plain by the *Harmony of the Evangelists*, in their *History* of our *Saviour*, where there is perfect Unity, yet without Uniformity; it is plain too by a consideration of Gods *smelling a savour of rest in the services of the Church* Universal, where there is great Variety, yet Unity. But the contentions and quarrels that often arise about these things, are the great causes of Gods displeasure; what may most cure hem, is then most to be desired and chosen; but what that is, I will not be so bold as to prescribe, whether a strict Conformity, upon Reasons in Governm:nt, best understood by Governours themselves, or a compassionate Indulgence most acceptable to Christianity.

Rule 3. They that without the violation of the true and substantial Rules of Religion, can most see, and use their liberty in these

these things, and thereby become instruments of the greatest publique good, are most acceptable to God : They that do not *Tyrthe the Mint*, and Cummin of Indifferent Things in *National Religion, and Worship*, with great noise and zeal (for that is the greatest injury can be done to it), but take them so far as they are instruments of Peace, and use them in their own Indifferency, for the greatest service to the publique ; They that insisting with any streis upon main things only, are most earnest in *turning many to righteousness* : These are they that *shall shine as Stars in the Nations Firmament*, if not now, assuredly in Eternity.

They that take advantage of the National profession, to call *sinners to repentance*, cause greater joy in Heaven than they that only think to secure themselves with the purer Societies ; Sure in this case God chooses mercy in seeking and saving them that are lost, rather than sacrificing alone by our selves, without regard to such : Christ chose rather to converse with *Publicans and Sinners*, than what look'd like purer Society, because he came to call not the *righteous, but sinners to repentance*. For the case was much different between the *scandalous* of the *Jewish National Church*, with which our Saviour conversed, and so of every *National Church* from the *Churches* gathered newly from among the *Heathen*, of whom the *Apostle* speaks, though even among them we read of no Separation from Religious Duties, but only from private converse among those that were scandalous, till they were as publickly disowned, as they ought to be by *Church Censures*.

But on the other side, they are *least in the Kingdom of Heaven*, and the *National Religion*, whether Rulers or People, that dispirit Religion by an immoderate heat for *meer Forms*; that are so warmly concern'd for Indifferencies, to give reason to suspect they are a principal part in their esteem of their own, or the National Religion : Whereas such things, so far as they may be any way contributory to good, are best observed with greatest silence and least cry ; being rather to be first so far prepared to acceptance and use, that there may be no *noise of Axes, Hammers or Tools* of force or compulsion about them.

Rule 4. In all Religious Duties, and the management or administration of them, there are different excellencies, like the *Psalms of Degrees*, or those parts of a *Psalms* honoured with the *Notes of Elevation* : There will, and may be different Keys of Affection, according

according to the differing hands playing upon us. *The People hung upon Christ to hear the Word of God, for he taught them with Authority, and not as the Scribes; yet they were bound by Christ to hear the Scribes.* Even thus in the National Ceremonies and Administrations, we may undoubtedly more warily adhere to, and pursue the things that are *more excellent*, and with a lighter touch pass over things of less moment, though in all we mind the glory of God, and the peace of National Religion. For Union in National Religion, must be primarily and chiefly in things truly called Religion, and in lesser things with a regard to peace only. *David was otherwise affected in praise, than in sacrificing a Bullock with Horns and Hoofs, seeing as he says, it pleased God more; yet in the fear of God he did both.* The Apostle was otherwise affected in the Preaching of Christ, than when he became *as a Jew to the Jews*; yet he did the latter Religiously too: The higher and closer the Ministry of Divine Truth and Service is, the greater and closer the adherence of the Soul ought to bee: Some things we ought to do with our *might*, and only *not to leave others undone.*

Rule 5. We ought to have a steady, and certain Gage within our selves, of what *our Lord* hath provided for the preserving the truth of Religion to us, and what care he hath taken so far, as is possible, with the conservation of that Truth to give us all advantage for publickness in Religion.

As to the truth of Religion, these three provisions will secure it.

1. That no man is so much bound to any Church, Communion, Nation, or Government, as to the true Religion, which is the first, and absolute necessary; nor shall his withdrawing from any of them in things impure and offensive to God, be charged upon him as sin or Schism: All the *putting out of Synagogues, casting out Names, or Excommunications*, signifie not any thing where God and Christ are in communion; and where those on whom they fall are of the *general Assembly, and Church of the First-born*, of that truly *Catholick Church* which is the only necessary Church to be of, *that we may be saved.*

2. The privatest Assemblies, yea even single Souls, so retiring that they may worship God according to his word, have the promise that God and Christ *will make their abode with them, come and sup with them and they with him, and they shall be written in the writing of Gods people*: The Catholick Church is always provided for them, that they may not be out of the best Society under Heaven. The

'Apostle encouraged the Hebrew Christians that might think themselves divided from the Jews that had been the only Church of God, by assuring them the Gospel brought them into a greater Church than that, viz. the General Assembly and Church of the First-born written in Heaven. This honour have all the Saints of Christ.

3. All the evils that can be endured upon account of Christ and obedience to him, will be abundantly recompenced by the saving of the soul, and that better and truer life. That Argument of our Saviour, *He that loses his life saves it, and he that saves it loses it: And what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loses his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?* stands always impregnable, that a man should buy the truth, and not sell it at any rate whatever. Thus for the Truth of Religion.

2. As to the Publickness of Religion, there are these great advantages for it.

1. That Christian Religion professes Love, endeavour of Good, and Salvation to all men, to every Creature, and hath antiquated all that *Judaism*, that neglects any for their *profit to Salvation*, though but Gentiles.

2. That a man may join his Religious Services to any thing truly good in Natural or Revealed Religion, whether of Families, Neighbourhoods, Cities, Nations, or of voluntary Societies, stopping there, and keeping himself free from other mens sins, so that the evil that other men adjoin to any thing true and good in Religion, being protested against, and divided from, does not corrupt what is good or true, but it may be enjoyed in the most publick way, while we have nothing to do with the evil, nor find it so mixt with the good, as to admit of no separation. And what is wanting in the publick worship of that which Christ hath ordained and commanded, does not necessitate the total departure from that publick Worship, when the very Institution is not chang'd by that want; for the true Christian may make up that want in privater Duties: Thus they that *feared the Lord, spake often to one another*, without separation from the Church.

Mal. 3. 16.

3. There is a free use granted by Christ of all things indifferent, or a freedom on each sides to do, or not to do, where no moral evil adheres, or disobedience to some express Command of Christs attends either part. If then Religion be not drawn out of those necessary things wherein Divine Wisdom, Goodness and Truth have plac'd it, and Traditions thereupon become Doctrines, which constantly carries along a *rejecting the Commands of God*, or a lower esteem

either of them for those *Traditions* sake; if there be no moral evil or indecency, nor that a too great cumber be drawn upon Religious Acts, every thing is by the Laws of Christ left to its own indifferency, as Reason invites, or perswades on either side to the doing, or not doing. All which sets men free from a *Jewish* yoke in these cases, and is the true Christian Liberty. *Eating or not eating, keeping a day, or not keeping it, Buying in a market, and going to a feast,* without asking any question for Conscience sake, without fear of the danger of moral defilement in those things that other mens sins defile only to themselves, if we keep our selves pure, are plainly the Liberty Christ hath published to us; *every Creature of God is pure, and not to be rejected, but received with thanksgiving;* no sin of man can pollute it to any, but himself. And this consideration may state to us the whole matter, that relates to order and decency. That order which God hath establisht in nature it self that *luxuria* and *religio*, which are written with a Sun-beam upon things themselves, are out of all dispute. God is the *Author* of them, and not of the contrary, *confusion* or *indecentcy*.

That order which is the prudential contrivance of men, though not the same in all places, times, and to all persons (as the former) yet ought to be chearfully complied with, as what is necessary to a National union in, and administration of publick Religion, both as to Officers and Things, seeing nothing can be settled without order.

Accordingly we find the wise and pious Governours among the *Jews* taking care and the people submitting to such Ordinations, and all under Divine Approbation.

The Order that is meerly of Humane position, and arbitration, moves the greatest doubt, standing in things that have only the thin pretexts of Antiquity to give them some venerableness, or that they are usages already in being, or that they add the Imaginary decency, that Ceremonies set out Humane actions with. Now as to this they that have the power of imposing, are equally to weigh the value of Religion it self, and what that may suffer for the sake of this order, and a great account lyes upon them before God; but for those that are under subjection, I add further,

As to this sort of order, I can only say this, that supposing it no way turn'd into *Doctrine* (as the *Pharisees* *not eating with unwashen hands*) but declar'd against as such, the consequences of observing, or not observing, are to be ballanc'd, and so the pra-

little of every conscientious man to be determined.

On one side stands the freedom of using this order, as an advantage to do good, the consideration of the peace of Nations, the National defence made more unite against false Religion at the price of Conformity to those more Arbitrary Impositions.

On the other side stands a just fear for the purity of Religion being either obscured, or the freedom of it incumbered; or for the reputation of Religion, which often suffers by those unnecessary adherencies, as if they entered into the nature of Religion it self.

I must yet allow the preference, in my own judgment, to that side by which National Religion is most served; but with the full perswasion, that God receives both, if over-bitter zeal on either side be not offensive to him; and with the concession, that National Religion were more happy, if more free; but if love adjust to each their due allowance, the services of both will be found with great acceptance in the common National Religion, as I doubt not their hands would be in the defence of it against the *Invasion* of a *National false Religion*.

But if any be over-rigid, or severe on either part, they may receive the full rewards of their own society, or party, but they lessen the higher recompences of doing the most publique good. The strictest Laws, either this way or that way, in these things, are of mens own making, and exacting, so from them only they have their reward, who are zealous beyond their own knowledge, and the goodness of the matter.

From all that hath now been said under this Rule, I collect,

1. That they that cannot agree to the publickly encouraged constitution of a Nation, should yet point their worship, as much as they can towards it: They should comply with all that is good in it, so far as they can be recieved, without launching beyond their judgments.

Thus Christianity was made as publique in all places, by the Apostles, as they could, by adjoyning it to any principle of Truth, or to the natural sense of Religion, they found any where; St. Paul gave solemn thanks to God in the midst of all that sailed with him, though a bad sort of men. Thus he Preached the true God and Christ at Athens upon their Inscription, To the unknown God, upon the Fundamentals of National Theology, upon the wise saying of a

Post.

Post of their own. He thought it best to acknowledg all that was good in the most faulty state of Religion, as an advantage to convince what was bad, and disagreeing to that good, and gaining men to unite with that whole element of Truth and Goodness, with which any sparks kindled in them already were so closely allied, as to gain them to the whole.

How much nearer then, and closer may Christians, and of the Reformed Christianity, fall in one with another, if we valued what we agree in at a higher rate, as certainly we ought to do, then what we differ about?

2. The way to make National Religion most National, is by comprehending all the differences, that can be reconcil'd with true Religion; while they that dissent in some things receive one another with a good, peaceable, holy, and publick temper of mind; as the great Argument and Inducement of which, we should all pray for the acceptance of the holy services of *all*, that *call on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, (as the Apostle distinguishes Christians, but immediately unites them again) *both theirs and ours*: They and we whatever smaller distinctions make the (*they*) and the (*we*) are both one in *our Lord Jesus Christ*. We ought therefore to pray for the common benefit of all so united, though not bound up in the same form with us, for a gracious audience, and reception of their and our Worship of God, that so *the Spirit of Love and Union* in the main, may convey all our services into *one before God*, where indeed (if they are as he requires) they meet stripp'd of all their *outward Circumstances, Form, and Ceremony*; Faith, and Obedience, being alone able to mount thither with them: And services so raised can by no means be spar'd for small differences in a National Religious Interest; for the *Angels of all such, behold the Face of our Father in Heaven*.

If *Darius*, though a *Heathen Prince*, had such a sense of the virtue of that true Religion he was not of, as to engage those of so great difference from him in their sense of God, to *pray for the peace of the King*, and his Sons; how much more should we, who are all of the same true *Faith and Worship*, and know the *Force and Energy* of it, by great acts of Favour to one another, in those things wherein we cannot be wholly one, yet all *joyn in praying for the acceptance of one anothers services*, and the *services of the whole Nation*, whereof we are not only Civil, but *Religious Members*: And if we are truly Religious, shall be so accounted with God, yet with the abatement

Exr. 6.10.

of

of our sinful differences and divisions? How should we therefore unite, that we may lose none of the things that we have wrought, but may receive a full reward?

Rule 6. It is the happiness of our Nation, that if any man truly understands, considers, and pronounces of our National Religion; It stands in the Scripture, making us wise to Salvation: In Faith in Jesus Christ, Repentance, Love of God, Fear of the Divine Majesty, all Acts of Justice, Love, Mercy, Compassion, true sincere Preaching the whole Word of God, Prayer, use of Sacraments, the Lords-day, Religious Discourses & Conferences, Catechetical Instructions, and Education of Youth in the knowledge of Religion; Restraint of Atheism, Irreligion, Intemperance, and Sensuality, generally and throughout the Nation: Compulsion of the very worst of men, to acknowledge a Deity and his Worship; for what is hypocrisy in them may turn to the salvation of good men.

These are the things I say again, that are truly our National Religion; all things pertaining to Order, Decency, outward Form, or Mode, are but the Vehicle, the conveyance of that True Religion, if the main Ends of which be obtain'd, viz. That these Religious Acts are perform'd but with that peace, and freedom from confusion: Confusion, destructive of all publick Actions; and with that Honourableness, that is agreeable to the state of every Nation, and this Nation particularly in the simplicity of Religious Worship: It is enough; and whatever on these accounts is commended in our National Religion, I freely own and acknowledge as reconcilable with these Characters, forbearing such, who (though agreeing in all main things) upon sincere endeavours to understand them so, cannot acquiesce in them as so, who deserve compassion. These things ought to be no Partition-Wall in our National Worshipping of God one with another, nor can they without great rigor and censoriousness very evil in the sight of God, be condemned in those, who for the sake of Substantial National Religion, the publickness and more universal benefit of it, wherein they are most truly zealous, pay obedience to the Rules of them.

Rule 7. Let us all strive, labour, preach, hear, and pray, and even suffer in the Reformation of our selves, and endeavours to Reform all others, according to the most excellent Rules of our most Holy Religion, professed in this Kingdom as our National Religion; that it may be found to Praise, Honour, and Glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, and be thought worthy to stand before the Son of

of Man, at his coming, before whom nothing but the Gold, and precious Stones of Substantial Truth and Goodness can stand, all else will be burnt off, as Hay and Chaff by the fire of that day, and they that have been hot and contentious for them, be saved only as by Fire, with difficulty and loss.

And in the mean time, that our Union and Love in the True Religion, may be to us an assurance of the Divine Favour, and presence; of his protection and blessing; that neither our Candlestick may be removed, nor our Nation, the present place of it, be taken away, for generally both are removed one with the other, or soon after one another.

Rule. 8: Let no man be discouraged from the most zealous, Affectionate joyning himself to, and promoting *National Religion*, because of that veneration due to the Name of *The Church* and *Churches*, according to the *Scripture*; For a *Nation* united in *True Christian Religion*, differs no more in the strictest notion, from a *Church*, than a *Body* of men united, and consecrated to God according to the *Law of Nature*, differs from a *Society* united, and consecrated to God according to an *Institution*; that is, no more than an *Institution* planted in *Nature*, differs from an *Institution* given by *Revelation*.

For one is the Appointment of God, of old from the very Foundations of *Humane Society*. The other after the Fall of *Nature*, and the Inability of it to its end.

An *Institution* therefore does not repeal a *Natural Law*, but takes care it should be fulfill'd, and compleated in its chiefest End.

Israel was a *Church* to God, being so devoted to him by his own *Institution*; and it was a *Holy Nation*, according to the *Original* *Exod. 19.* *Law*, being elevated by the *Institution*, to its true perfection, as a *Nation*. 6.

The *Christians*, to whom the *Apostle Peter* wrote; As they were a *Church* according to the *Institution* of *Christ*, so they were a *Holy Nation*, as he styles them, succeeding into the place of that whole *Jewish Nation*. Consecrated to God by the *Law of Nature* upon *Nations*; though but *strangers* scattered abroad, yet to show the great value God has of a *Nation* devoted to him, they are stiled *A Holy Nation*: The *Institution* of the *Catholic Church*, as the seat of the *True Religion* of *Jesus Christ*, makes a *Nation* united in that

True

True Religion, both a *Church*, as that *Catholick Church* hath thereby a Residence in it; and much more than those fore-mentioned *scattered Jews* a *Holy Nation*, as it is Nationally resign'd up to God in the *True Religion*, according to the *Law of Nature* made perfect by the *Institution*.

Where then a *Nation* is united in the Truth of *Christian Doctrine*; the Purity of Divine Worship; the Holy Rules of Practice; the Catholick Love of all Christians *Baptized into the same Body*; made to drink into that one Spirit; In Pastors and Teachers Ministering the same Gospel, the *Apostles* infallibly deliver'd and seal'd with Miracles (All which are marks of Segregation from false Churches or Members (of the True Church) falsely so called): Here is the *Catholick Church* in a *Nation*, according to the *Institution*; and here is the *Holy Nation*, according to both the *Law of Nature*, and the *Institution*.

So again, Where a *Nation* brings home Religion into the most particular National Districts, or Divisions; as near as may be according to the *Institution of Christ* for particular Churches: Here is a *Nation of Churches*, which, in regard they all consent in one *National Union*, are without any impropriety styled *A National Church*; and every such Society is both a *Holy Society*, according to the *Law of Nature* devoted to God; and a *Church-Society*, according to the *Institution* directing, and perfecting that *Law of Nature*.

Now the Institution of particular Churches by Christ, I understand to be that, where he says, *If Two or three agree*, and are gathered, or enchurch'd in my Name, *I will be in the midst of them*.

Wherein he does not only encourage the smallest number in case of Exigency, or Necessity, but couches some Rules, whereby much greater numbers, whether of Christians in Separation from Civil Societies, or united according to them, are to be formed.

1. As first in all (excepting the Universality) that is Essential to the *Catholick Church*, which is *The Church*; of the nature of which each particular must therefore partake, that it may be a Church.
 2. In a number proportionable to *Edification*, in all the Duties and Ordinances of Christian Religion.
 3. In the Humility, Modesty, and unassumingness of Christianity: For he that instituted his Churches in such small numbers, and those not forced, but agreeing, projected nothing by that Institution, for Domination, or Grandeur.
 4. In the simplicity, and plainness Christian Religion professes; For Churches instituted in such a paucity of Members were never

never design'd to be Courts of *Forensick business*, nor capable of Subordinating themselves so, as that their Members should be Fatigu'd with long and tedious Suits and Appeals, removed from one part to another (*worse than going to Law before unbelievers*), as the *Romish Tyranny* hath contriv'd. Whereas our Saviours methods for *Complains* and *Admonition* in case of *Scandal*; for *Reconciliation*, in case of *Repentance*; or *severer Discipline*, in case of *obstinacy*; are natural, easie, and speedy, as is plain to any observer. 5. Christian Churches allowed in *Two* or *Three*, shews the care of Christ, that there should be a proportion betwixt the strength and gifts of his ordinary Ministers, since the Cessation of the *Apostolick measures*; and their charge and trust: For our Lord would not by his Institution give any Reason to *Moses* his complaint, *I am not able to bear this great people*.

Thus was our *Saviours Institution* of *particular Churches*; and though it does not lay any absolute Interdict upon the Truly prudential, though Additional Constitutions, either of Nations, or other Humane Societies, proceeding according to the general maxims, upon which Societies strengthen themselves: yet with this Caution, that what is so done may not enact any thing by which the main and great Ends of this *Institution* should be defeated. However that the Institution should never be pleaded, but stand free from the Errors men fall too often into, in pursuit of the Maxims forenamed; whereby they would aggrandize Society in Religious Things, or make it comport with Civil State: But that his Institution should be a standing Rule, first to avoid them, after to discover, and reform them; or if they grew extreme, and not to be reduced, as in *Popery*, to warrant a withdrawing from them.

But to apply all this to our purpose, If the main Ends of the *Catholick* and *particular Churches*, Instituted by our Lord and Saviour, are obtain'd; There is no Encounter, but a most happy Agreement between the *Natural Law* of *National Religion*, and the *Institution of Churches*, which, as I before asserted, are not to be drawn into a Desert, or Wilderness, or shut up in Cells and Cloysters, or confin'd to one point of the World (as the *Donatists* would have had the True Church), but are to be fix'd in the midst of the Universe, of Nations and Cities, as the very places of the *Candlesticks*, or *Churches* (from which in just indignation to those places, when unworthy of them, they are remov'd) in the midst of the Business,

Trade, and Conversation of the World ; as is apparent by the *Churches* we read of in the Scriptures.

Let then True Religion (as Christianity contended, and will at last, in much higher Degrees, overcome) be as wide as the Universe; *Let the Kingdoms of the World become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and his Christ* ; and the *Universal Church* will be as wide ; Bring it into particular Societies, and particular *Churches* will be as many, as numerous as they.

A *Church-State* is indeed a State of Separation : the Church-Catholick is a Separation from the Universe, because there are *Fallen Angels*, unholy, and unhappy ; because there is a multitude of mankind in the same State.

But this is only for the sake of True Religion, and the Happiness consequent upon it, that there is such a Separation ; and this the very *Law of Nature* agrees in.

Thus particular Churches, whenever they are a Separation from particular Societies ; It is for the sake of *True Religion*, and its due Administration : Restore that, and the *Law of Nature*, and the *Institution*, become both one.

Then a *Nation*, and a *National Church* coalesce into one : then Civil Societies in particular, and particular Churches grow into one ; and God is pleas'd to dwell in them, and with greater delight, because all his *Institutions Natural* and *Reveal'd* unite in one.

I have only one Caution to add, That the state of Things hitherto in the world is far from perfection ; that whethersoever we look, we can't find it ; so that to be removing from one thing to another in hope of it, is perpetually to give our selves to change, except Things are no way tollerable, but the very Substance, Rules and Principles are corrupted, and that there are no Arts of Retirement, and withdrawing from them left ; we should consider how the pious *Jews* and *Israelites*, how our Saviour and the *Apostles*, how the *undefiled names in Sardis* mannag'd themselves in the midst of great Corruptions ; what retreats from the Evils, and yet joyn-ing in all that was good, was visible in their practise, what kind of

- 1 Cor. II. Division the good and approved *Corinthians* made from the misde-
 19. meanors of the bad, without forsaking the Church, that we may imitate their Examples ; and continue to do the greatest service to the *Churches*, or *Nations* we are members of ; neither silencing our due Resentments of Evil in our place and station, nor re-
 ing

ing our selves from that *Body* we are of: But that All *our Things* 1 Cor. 16.
may be done in *Charity*. 14.

Rule. 9. In the last place, let us not think, Nations and other Incorporations of mankind slide away with this world, and are wholly lost in the future state of Things; and that only every man shall appear, and be judg'd singly by himself: Our *Resurrection*, which is the day of our *Regeneration*, of our *new life*, and *appearance in Bodies*, will present us not only single, but in our state of Community, wherein we were here in the world; even from Families to Nations, that we may receive the things done in those Bodies, as well as in our own Bodies; then the Good we have done, or omitted to do; and the Evil we have withstood, or been the occasion of, or not prevented, when we might, shall be severely accounted for by each in their station.

Each *Magistrate* shall be surrounded with his sphere of *Authority*, wherein he was set here, and judg'd in that: And each *Minister of Religion* justified or condemned in that very Orb, wherein he was fix'd as a *Star*. And the several Magnitudes of both *Magistrates* and *Ministers* will then be dreadful to them; however they have coveted, and been Ambitious of them here, if they have not enlighten'd their whole space, because their *Judgment* will be greater. Even every man shall be judg'd by his Services to the Publick in his place and station, how private soever, if it hath never so little exceeded his single capacity. And who in his Reason can think? God will then account with men for *Mint and Cummin*, small and disputable Things, howsoever zealous, or rather fond of them they have been in themselves, and earnest with others concerning them: Those things that have truly center'd in the *Glory of God*, and the *Salvation of mens souls*, in *Faith, Repentance, and a Holy Life*, in *Love and Peace* will be of the only moment at that Tribunal.

This therefore should be the most powerful perswasive upon us, to do all the good herein we can, in that Community wherein we are fix'd, according to our *Talent*, though but a *single one* (much more if our Talents have been *Two or Five*), that we may in that Day of *Recompences* enter into the joy of our Lord.

T H E E N D.